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By Shank and By Crank

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THE SILENT WAY.

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By Shank and By Crank

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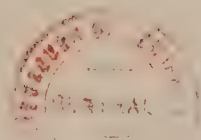
EDMUND VALE



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY R. M. HUTCHINGS

William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London

1924



TO
HUGH CORBET VINCENT.

*"A Friend in need
Is a Friend indeed."*



PREFACE.

AT the outset, the writer of these simple travels will ask an indulgence of the reader, namely, that he will not hold them in the light of tours. They are merely journeys undertaken in order to get from one place to another, or made in search of some object. Certainly the routes followed have often been far from direct, but it is a strange paradox that the slower one travels the more one feels oneself at liberty to meander. It is for this reason that in the writer's experience walking is far the most enjoyable form of travel. He exchanged the Shank for the Crank only because of the extension of the system of tarring roads from highways to byways. A tarred road surface is at once ugly to look at, and bad to walk on. Perched in the saddle of a bicycle, the last of these defects is removed, and the former is modified by reason of the increased height above the ground and a feeling of greater dissociation with the thing abhorred.

Perhaps the reader will regard this insistence on the difference between touring and travelling

as a quibble. Of such quibbles, he will say, are the great cults of the world made up. But also of such small differences are simple pleasures separated from commonplaces. If I go from one place to another and chose as my method of progress to go on foot, whatever goes on within my sphere of ken is all a matter of business with me. Wild nature, human nature, mechanical nature are borne in on my reflections with some serious tinge. In that I am on a journey in all sad earnest, whatever I come in contact with seems for the moment to be intimately related to me myself. But on a tour one is in holiday trim; one looks only for the spectacular. One has no business with anything that is business; if one has, it is a ludicrous anomaly not to be tolerated for a moment. Men of affairs can afford to be inconsistent; confessed pleasure-hunters cannot!

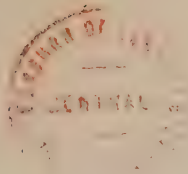
E. V.

With the single exception of "A Japanese Walk," which appeared in the 'Cornhill Magazine,' and is reprinted with the Editor's permission and the writer's thanks, all the papers were originally published in 'Blackwood's Magazine.'

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A WELSH WALK

WHAT IS ROMANCE ?

I WALKED once in a mountain pass
In downright winter weather,
And the mist sagged drearily from high
To the hail-crusted heather.

I passed a place where Tempest danced,
In smoky eddies whirling,
While the clouds upon the rocks like sails
Were furling and unfurling.

The noise of floods now trumpeted,
And now at once recoiling,
Seemed to faint hollowly away
And hold the distance boiling.

All suddenly, it seemed such fact
As brooks no human "Why ?"
A voice in me cried, "Creature, sing !
Romance is passing by."

And song rose up within me
As a boat rides up a swell ;
And I heard the iron goblets
Of the Wicked clink in Hell.

And the old Kings in their mountain tombs
And Spirits bound in trance,
Huskily I heard them toast
"God save ye still Romance !"

Then Silence held all Space agape
As though Time paused to nod,
And Romance's name was praised alone
By the clear lips of God.

A WELSH WALK.

An account of a journey on foot from Leominster
to Llanfairfechan in November 1912.

I HAD it in my mind to visit the house of my Fairy Godmother at Llanfairfechan in the middle of the winter. There was plenty of time, so I said I would walk. The distance was roughly 110 miles, so I allowed four days. My paraphernalia was a rucksack and a light cane walking-stick.

On this morning that I sallied forth, the lowlands were grey with mist, and a cold sleet-rain was blowing from the east. No morning, I thought, for any sort of passenger but a walker. I took my way through Leominster town, and then up north, skirting the wonderful old village of Kingsland, where Merewald, son of great Penda, the pagan king of Mercia, lies buried under a wooded mound. It was this same Merewald, called The Lion, who founded the old priory church of Leominster. On my right I passed the monument which commemorates the battle of Mortimer's Cross, and a little farther on I came to a fork in the roads where was a mighty old oak, marked in my map as "Battle Oak." I always think that people, no matter how "up to date," who live on

the site of great deeds of the past, must, almost by virtue of the air they breathe and the soil they sleep over, have some mystic link with things of the old time. So, making the rain my excuse, I entered the little cottage that stood by the ancient tree. At first the old lady who lived there and received me very kindly would talk of nothing but her ailments and the virtues of her deceased husband, and when I referred to the oak, told me how boys were not allowed to throw stones at it, and how they always did. Then all of a sudden she said, "Do you know what the name of this cottage is, sir?"

"No," said I.

"It is called Blue Mantle Cottage," said she, "because when the big battle was fought between here and the Ambray and Shobdon Hill yonder, a man in a blue mantle jumped into yon tree and preached a sermon or summat!"

I incline to the "summat" rather than the sermon, but what was the significance of the blue mantle? The road continued level, though hills rose darkly through the rain on either side, and the ancient earthworks of Croft Ambray frowned almost sheer above the way. At Wigmore I came to another halt, and entered an inn for some bread and cheese. Here was nothing remarkable. Three men sat over their mugs inveighing against the weather, and a gramophone snarled dance-music from a neighbouring apartment. Leaving Wigmore I came on a sudden in sight of the castle. Here was the keynote of the

place. When I saw the ruins of this grim fortress lifted up apart on the high hillside, in stately and solemn retirement, I felt the grip of old times. I felt the thrill of the old terror of the name of Mortimer go through me, and the name of Wigmore, which a few moments before had only suggested beer and gramophones, now stood out in red letters in my mind with that sublimeness of gloom that a boy knows when in some old history-book he turns up the picture of an execution. "Yes, I am Wigmore," the old horned remnants seemed to say. "I am the old dead tree; yon poverty-stricken hovels are but the withering parasites that lived on me in my glory, and use my name now, but have not of my sustenance." Rain and mist! wonderful things for lending that note of the morbid and the mysterious to things that have been.

I was now bound for Bucknell. There was a footpath to be found somewhere, and at last I struck it. I had better have kept to the road, for it led over ploughed fields, where I was presently almost over boot-top at every step. And now great ragged coiling clouds came sailing over the hill right ahead, dropping long sweeping tresses that gradually hid the landscape between me and them. There was a lull in the wind and rain for about two seconds, then it came on to blow what sailors would call "a regular buster," and down tore the hail right in my face. I had just got to where there were two or three trees, so I crept up behind an old oak. Both wind and hail went on

increasing with terrific violence, twigs and dead leaves rushed past me in a headlong course, and other things seemed out of mere madness to shoot up into the air and spin a dance. Suddenly there was a noise like a gun and then a splash of broken twigs. A big bough of one of the trees had carried away, and now lay not twenty yards from me with half its bulk lolling on the fence. Like the ancient gods of wrath appeased with sacrifice, the storm seemed to have marked its victim, for the wind began to drop as suddenly as it had sprung up, and all at once the whole of the hail, like a great curtain, swept away, and I watched it hurrying off under its weird tossing clouds. But its brief passage had improved neither the ploughed lands nor my temper, so I fell into harmony with creation, and was at wrath with myself and all things. In this frame of mind I had soon stalked savagely to the end of the sloppy footpath and put myself into full swing on the high-road with all the force of the rage that possessed me. In Brampton Brian I passed the largest yew-hedge I have ever seen. Its great mass quaked and shuddered in what of the blast still blew, and I knew that behind its deep lugubrious folds it hid another remnant of the Mortimers. As I crossed the young Teme and entered Bucknell the rain drew off, and in an instant, such is Nature's high art, I had forgotten the bad weather and my wet things, and was rejoicing in the sparkling freshness that thrilled the air of evening. At Bucknell I entered a little inn and

ordered tea in the bar parlour. There were four men assembled here, of whom I began to inquire the shortest way to Clun, for, though I could spy it out well enough on my map, I am always pleased to hear a local direction,—it is something to bear in one's mind afterwards when one is on a lonely way. These good people, after holding a conclave, told me there was no short-cut worth speaking of, and started to instruct me how to follow round by the big road. This they did out of sheer humanity, being assured that I should lose my way in the dark among by-lanes, for country folk have no faith in a map. "Now," said I, "I will tell you how I should go." Then I described my short-cut by the map, telling them the houses I would pass and their names, the orchards, the streams, the turns in the road, and the hills. They looked on rather surprised. Then I made a lucky hit. "When I win round this corner," I said, "I shall see the light of Pentre Hodre farm right on ahead about half a mile." I might have been possessed with a devil, so much were they struck with this information; but it loosened their tongues, and they told me most interesting things about the way which afterwards, though it was pitch-dark and I could not see, kept my thoughts in the right atmosphere of the place where I was.

When I walked from Bucknell it was dusk, except for the keen grey lights that lay all along under the heavy clouds in the West. Presently I turned off the main road, and got on to a

lane that led steep up. I know of no vehicle that gives me any pleasure to go uphill in. When a horse is in the matter I feel for it, and so I do for a motor, or a steam-engine when it is hard put to, and as for hill-climbing on a bicycle, I know nothing more miserable. But I love a good stout hill to walk up. Deep-set in human nature is a wonderful link to Mother Earth. With some it is even a yearning. So it is with me when I walk. I feel that there is nothing worth speaking of between me and my beloved element, and I feel content at night to be tired because the Earth has made me so, and to have had pleasure because the Earth and I have made it together.

After I had pushed on some way and passed that turn I had described to the men in the inn, and again the light in the farm half a mile distant, the lane became steeper and more rough, and I knew that I must be ascending the brow marked on the map with the weird and stirring name of "The Fiddler's Elbow." It was an upland plateau, and was so dark when I got to its level that there was scarcely enough light to show in the long streaky puddles that lay on the track. There was plenty of wind up here, and the air was wonderfully fresh and sweet, so that I could tell by the smell of it that there was common and heathy land down to the left, and up on the right I could hear the roaring of pine-trees. In such weather at such a time there is no doubt that The Fiddler's Elbow is very awesome and lonesome

and haunted. I must confess I was not sorry when I came at last upon the glimmer of a cottage. Just at that moment it began to pour heavily, and as it had only the appearance of a shower I resolved to take shelter. There were several cottages together here. To one of them I went and knocked. I could hear the loud voice of a woman issuing orders within, and in a moment the door was opened by a very ugly boy; he stooped his head at me as people do when looking from light to dark, rather like an old fowl when you disturb him at roost by night.

"It's the Curate!" he said, and slammed the door in my face. While I was wondering why on the one hand I should have deserved this title, and on the other what the Curate might have deserved to have the door shut in his face, the portal was opened again, and this time by one of the prettiest little girls I have ever seen. She likewise bobbed her head at me as her brother had done.

"No, it isn't!" she said, and shut the door again with a bang. As I was debating whether to let another member of the family come and inspect me after this fashion, I heard the voice of the woman raised in command again. The door instantly flew open and brother and sister regarded me in silence. So I went in, and making my excuses, sat down by a large open fire and began to fondle a kitten. The family appeared either to be or have been at a meal. There was a dear old man sitting hard by the coast of the table, where he seemed to hover between lighting

a pipe and finishing the last morsel of his tea. The lady who owned the voice, and whose face was good-humoured but rather hard, was striding about making remarks which comprehended us all. The ugly boy had retired to the farthest corner and was observing me intently between the swelling profiles of two robust ornaments. The little girl alone continued to eat and drink. Then she got up suddenly and said, "Thank you for my good tea." This must have been a grace, and I think a most charming one. When the old gentleman had got his pipe under way he began to discourse on rheumatics and the state of the weather, till his wife shot into the conversation like a torrent of hail, explaining to me why I had been mistaken for the Curate. Through every little rift that occurred in this downpour the old man went on telling me his tale of woe, even if it was a matter of two words only. But I heeded neither of them, being busy making friends with the ugly boy, who had sneaked from his hiding-place and come up beside me.

"Have a cup of tea," whispered the little girl to the kitten. "Or a glass of cider," suggested the ugly boy, turning his back on me and frowning across at a pleasing likeness of Moses and Aaron.

"Leave the gentleman alone, Elsie! Stop thy clatter, Jack," cried the lady, and then in the same breath to me—"Won't you take a cup of tea, sir? or a glass of cider?" But even this official invitation I must refuse, knowing that it

was time to be on my way again. So I went forth of that cottage into the night and rain, wonderfully refreshed. For coming as a guest in the dark to share for a few moments the simple communion of a family life, being a stranger whose name they know not (and you know not theirs), coming into close contact with lives you had never thought on before ; or travelling in the darkness through a country you cannot see and which you have not much at heart, and then mingling with people to whom this spot is all the world and finding there love and hospitality, gives one a sense of something that I have called refreshment, knowing, however, that it is a feeble term for what I mean.

That night I slept in Clun.

The morning was a splendid contrast to the day before. The sun was shining in a blue sky, and each object was doing its utmost to spell out every scrap of colour it could. I was on the march by half-past seven, taking the way which leads by lanes across country and over the hills to the town of Montgomery. The outlook began to be much more interesting than the day before, and the clear air, and the bright freshness of everything, made it seem worth while to have had a wet day. But on a sudden it came on to snow. This was only a fit, however, and when the cloud had blown over the sky was as clear as before.

I passed through Mainstone. After this I fol-

lowed a footpath winding round the base of a hill. It made itself the boundary between wood and meadow, and was very generous of spring and freedom to the foot after the road. The country here was pretty but rather uneventful. Finding the road again I proceeded about half a mile, when suddenly, like the shifting of a great transformation scene, I came face to face with a most astounding view. River, plain, and mountain were ranged in stately fashion before my eyes, as if they had sprung from nowhere. Once, when in the high latitudes, I looked up to find a certain star, the whole heavens burst into flaming torrents and cataracts of *aurora borealis*, and my breath was taken as if by a blow. And now I felt something of the same sensation at this sudden transition from a dull outlook to a splendid far-reaching prospect. This is how it had come about. I was on much higher land than I had thought. The place was really a lumpy sort of tableland, and now I had come to its limit, where it terminated in a bank that sloped away steeply to a great alluvial plain, which is the end of the valley of the Severn. But without knowing that I was on the verge of anything particular I came round a corner which was hedged high, and there the road changed its direction and branched to left and right, for this was the top of the bank and here was the view. Down below stretched this beautiful plain, miles away to the north, and on either hand rose the hills whose summits all, and whose flanks in part, were white with snow.

By means of taking sights on my marching compass I identified these hills on my map, and most of the villages, streams, and roads that dotted themselves and threaded themselves over the face of the lovely plain. I could also see the town of Montgomery—whither I was bound—some six miles to the left, under a steady haze of smoke. Then I got on my way again. Presently I met a man going in the same direction as myself, so I slackened my pace and we fell to talking. When I told him I was bound for Wales, he said he should feel it a privilege to see me over the border. The border was not more than half a mile from here. Then we passed through a breach in Offa's dyke. "That was built by the Devil," he said, "and it is one of the proofs that the Devil is a very strong man." He told me that himself and his father and his father's father, and for aught he knew his father's father's great-grandfather, had spent much of their time trying to dislodge a portion of the dyke from their estate. Not only had they found this task impossible, but also very disheartening. For the man assured me that when the Devil was not over-pressed with business elsewhere he would visit this spot, and lo! when you woke up in the morning you found a patch had grown where at least two generations had spent their energy. So we came to the border, which is on a little bridge, and while I stepped over into Wales he remained in England, and we shook hands and parted.

I love Wales, and I always feel a thrill of keen

pleasure when I find myself there again. But to walk into Wales is much more exciting and much more delightful than any other way of approaching the land of lovely scenery and lovely voices—except no doubt to ride there on horseback.

Montgomery is a finely situated town. Above its clustered houses beetles a tremendous crag whose aspect is black and lowering and dark with overhanging vegetation. On the summit the ruins of some ancient fortress still remain, and a gigantic earthwork made by the Roman, the Briton, or perhaps the Devil himself, completes a picture which makes one feel as one approaches it the peculiar atmosphere created by an old romantic ballad whose theme is love, but whose chiming refrain tolls out persistently the note of tragedy. Perhaps the name has something to do with this—that is, when the name is pronounced properly, giving the o's the same value as in the word London. I cannot imagine that the impression would be the same if it were known as Brown's Town or Jones's City. But you say to yourself as you draw nigh, "I am walking into Montgomery," and the name flashes out like fire from a gloomy bloodstone. Among other superstitions and old wives' fables I firmly believe that there is a very great deal in a name. I think names affect one's lives as much as any other sort of environment, and more, because this environment is always with us. There is colour and spirit in a name that must affect the

bearer of it. For instance, I would call Roger and Margaret red names, Alice a blue name, Edwin a white one, and Lucy a rich buttercup yellow. I should be very much surprised to see a Roger behave like an Edwin or a Reginald like a William. And so surely as I believe this, do I with consistency believe that a name affects not only a place and its people but a nation and its hordes.

Entering a small sweet-shop which called itself a Cyclist's Rest, I asked the stout lady who came to bid me welcome if I could have a cup of tea and some bread and butter. She again told me "Welcome," and by the pleasant bright way she said it I knew without doubt that I was in Wales. Then she showed me into a little room furnished up to the hilt, the chairs stifled with antimacassars and the shelves gorged with ornaments. This sort of apartment always defeats my courage. "May I have tea in your kitchen, ma'am?" said I, recalling mine hostess. "Yes, welcome," she said in a soft pretty way, as a cow might answer if you asked leave to come into her shippon.

While my little meal was being prepared I went to visit the church, shod only with felt slippers, as I had sent my boot to a doctor of neat's leather in the town. The church is very fine. There is a very beautiful rood screen and miserere stalls, and an interesting effigy to a dependant of Queen Elizabeth. Outside in the churchyard is "The Robber's Grave." Tradition says that who lies within was an innocent man hanged for theft. On the scaffold he called God

to witness that he was innocent. "And if so be that I lie not," he cried, "let no grass ever grow upon my grave!" A rose-tree is growing there now, and in the green sod a cross has long ago been cut, but in the cross no grass grows.

In the kitchen of the sweet-shop I found mine hostess had an elder sister more portentous in dimensions than herself, who was addressed as Sister Anne. The old mother was there also, and a bashful young wench of about fourteen years. For the first five minutes there was a grim silence, during which I drank tea and studied the map and said nothing, and all the other eyes in the room were turned solemnly upon me. Then there was that sort of a murmur that the beginning of a shower makes upon a window-pane, rising and failing, and rising yet again, and now they were all in full swing talking Welsh.

"No," said Sister Anne, "I am sure he is a cyclist."

"He has left a pack in the front room," said Sister Jane. "I think he must have things to sell."

"A pedlar does not go about in carpet slippers," said the little girl.

"And a cyclist does not ask to come into the kitchen," said the old lady in the chimney corner.

"Both your surmises are wrong," said I in English. "I neither pedal wares nor wheels." This remark they did not understand, nor did they pay much heed to it, being dumfounded that I could understand Welsh. For the Welsh, unlike

any other nation of my acquaintance, dislike it that an Englishman should know a word of their language. When I was a boy they would teach me their ancient tongue readily enough, because I suppose they did not think I should take it seriously. But I have great difficulty in learning from them now.

Day was declining when I left Montgomery, and as I got down to the level of the river Severn and crossed it, darkness was come. As soon as I could see the North Star I stopped and corrected the magnetic variation of my compass by it. Then I came to a place called Berriew, where I decided to halt for refreshment. I went to an inn and asked if I could have a poached egg and a cup of tea. The landlord was a jolly man, but he showed me into a most dismal state apartment, and lit a solitary lamp in the middle of it. This place filled my heart with cold comfort, so I asked the jolly landlord if I might not have my meal in the kitchen. "I am very sorry, sir," said he, "but the children are having a bath there."

"Never mind," said I. "I shall ask them riddles and fill them with courage for their aquatics while I eat." So this came about, and a very jolly meal I had in the steam and the laughter of the little lads.

The maid who brought me my meal asked me whether I proposed to visit Bala. I told her I hoped to be there the following night. She asked me if I would have the kindness to go and stay

with her aunt, who kept a little temperance hotel there. I told her that I would endeavour to do myself the honour. So she wrote down the name of the inn.

When I got away it was very dark and still another hour to moonrise. Though my direction took me now through lanes, the way was not very easy to find, as there were so many turnings and little cross-roads. The moon was up by now and all the fields were white with it. This, and the eerie feeling that no doubt the fairies were abroad and close to if I could only see them, made me feel as fresh and merry as if I had not walked a mile.

I entered the inn at Castle Caer Einion, and after talking to the men who were gathered in the bar till the time limit I went to bed.

I got away from Castle Caer Einion at about half-past six. It was a bright jolly morning. There had been a frost, and a film of snow had fallen, and now lay on the road and on the hedges and house-roofs. The air was fresh and free and nimble, and the measured ring of a smith's hammer across the silent morning seemed to strike the right note of the moment. Soon I came to a stone bridge that crossed the river Vyrnwy, and then I entered the pretty valley of that river. Here lies a most remarkable stretch of straight road, at the end of which one finds the pretty little village called Pont Robert. Here, on sighting an inn and three exceedingly bonny girls standing in front of it, I bent my steps there to ask the way,

because there was a hiatus in my maps between this place and Llanwddyn. But the three bonny girls seemed rather to enjoy some joke about me than to show much promise of guidance. However, after they had all inquired the way of each other, and then asked it of me, and then discovered they did not know it, one of them went into the house and brought out their sire the landlord. He was very cheerful and very polite, and told me that he was considered the best fisherman in North Wales, and that I should not be able to find my way to Llanwddyn. I told him that not only to Llanwddyn was I going that day but even to Bala. But he shook his head at the trees on the opposite hill and laughed me to scorn with great show of wisdom.

Anyhow, he very kindly gave me most minute directions as to how I might reach the next village of Dolanog, which I set down on a piece of paper and then took my leave. Crossing the river again I started climbing the opposite hill. When I had ascended through several steep fields and gone up a little lane I bore to the right, and came out on to a broad common which was a tableland. Up here the snow was lying ankle-deep, and I began to wonder what it would be like on the mountains which I must cross before my journey's end. The edge of this common follows the course of the Vyrnwy, the river roaring far down on my right in the sheer confines of the shaggy wooded valley. The sky overhead was of the blue that colours steel when it is being tempered, and

made me think again of snow and the Welsh mountains.

Following my directions I eventually came to Dolanog. There was a combined shop and post-office here, which I entered, and asked the post-mistress if she could give me a cup of tea, whereupon she most obligingly said she could. My first act was to purchase a thing that is really an abomination unto me—namely, a pictorial post-card. This miserable device for distorting people's impressions of rural England is only fit to be trafficked in by those who aver that they can see the country from a motor-car. For the flat anæmic landscapes and dull buildings and hideous streets these things wear upon their faces, without life or light or perspective or atmosphere, are the exact replica of the impressions one records in one's mind of the country when travelling in a motor-car, or still more when driving one. Of all the ugly children that hag Mrs Camera is mother to, I think the ugliest are the pictorial post-card and the Picture Palace. And so having bought one of these and thereto a halfpenny stamp, I began to make friends with the little postmisses and postmasters, of whom there were a great number. I do not remember whether anybody under this hospitable roof spoke English, but it made a great and favourable impression on my mind that all the children had Welsh names. And beautiful names they were (when pronounced aright). There was a Goronwy and an Elvart and a Gladys and an Anwyl Daveis (Dear Daveis by

interpretation), and a young ruddy-cheeked swashbuckler who delighted in the swashbuckling name of Rhywallon Llewelyn and more—but I must mention yet another, it struck me as so beautiful, Lili Blodyn (Lily Flower).

And now the tea was brewed, and lo ! what a spread. There were cakes and oatcake, and honey and jam and bread and butter, and buttered scones and tea. When I had partaken, I asked what I might pay for my festivity, including my half-penny stamp and my penny pictorial post-card. The good lady considered a while and then said, "Would threepence be too much ?" "No," said I, "I think it is exceedingly moderate, but for the sake of the pretty names of your children I will pay you sixpence, if I may." The master of the house was away. Of this I was very sorry, because his books were so interesting. I think, considering the size of the library, which was in a cupboard with glass doors, I have never seen so large a field of information covered by so few books. There were books on all sorts of subjects in Welsh and English, from Art to Arctic Exploration.

But a bad thing had befallen without while I was within,—it had come on to snow heavily. The track that I had to follow now was an exceedingly rough one. I continued a long way over desolate uplands—the snow getting worse—till at last from the top of a brow I caught sight of the telegraph poles of the big road which I had heard at Dolanog I should soon cross.

Now when I am walking I always like to keep in touch with three things. First, my position on the map; secondly, a sort of general feeling and knowledge of the place I am travelling through, to provide if possible an atmosphere for my spirit to dwell in (else what is the use of travelling?); and thirdly, the people. It is a great thing to carry away a voice from the place you pass through. Often after a long tramp I can remember nothing for a while but the many voices and the pretty eyes of the children I have talked to. For, after all, when you take a long walk, what is it but that you are making to yourself a sort of pot-pourri whose fragrance remains in your memory, to be drawn upon at any time whatsoever in your after-life—for only those things that are pleasant remain, and the others, like weeds, having no part or harmony with the rest, quickly disappear. And the most valuable ingredients of your pot-pourri shall be the voices and eyes of children.

So now, almost at the same time as I hove in sight of the main road, I also hove in sight of a boy standing at a cottage door. He had bright blue eyes and a freckled face and rich fiery hair. He grinned as I passed, which, I thought, might be a sign of intelligence. Anyhow, I was determined to come into touch with the voice of this desolate upland, so, for want of something to say, I asked him how far it was to the big road (I judged it to be three-quarters of a mile).

“How far is it to the big road?”

“The turpick road?”

"Yes."

"Nine miles."

"Nine miles! Why, look, lad, it lies yonder, right there!"

"Yes."

"How far is it, then?"

"Nine miles."

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen."

"Have you ever been to the turnpike road?"

"No."

"Good gracious! Why not?"

"I go to school *that* way."

"Were you born here?"

"Yes."

"Then the next fine day you walk to the turnpike road and back, and if you can prove that it is eighteen miles, I will send you five shillings by return of post, and we'll go into the world together and make our fortunes."

After the turnpike road came a long weary ascent and more open country. The snow held off for a few minutes, and then came on again worse than ever. At last I got to a very steep descent, and all in a minute—it seemed—I was right in the thick of the hills. I say it seemed a sudden event, because, although the road had been very hilly all the way from Dolanog, the outlook from it was dull and plain as far as I could see—which was only a little distance, on account of the snow. Well, it was only another two miles to Llanwddyn, on the high-road, which I had just

rejoined. But two miles on a high-road in snow is far more dull than twenty miles on a rough track under any conditions. However, I overcame the spirit of monotony by completing the distance with a telegraph boy who was returning to Llanwddyn. The sight of his easy walking refreshed me, for boys born and bred in the hill country always know how to walk. It was getting dusk now. After bidding him farewell I took the path which led to the big hotel, which is one of those enormous edifices, like the railway hotels of Ireland, which perch themselves and all their luxury in the midst of wild surroundings, where their only neighbours are peasants and small farmers. Here they and their company stand (as a rule) aloof from every one else, a smear of civilisation, and as often as not spoiling with their hideous incongruities a beautiful prospect. Any one who has been to Tintagel will appreciate what I say. At the door of this grand hostelry, then, I arrived like Father Christmas, or a snow man—except for the top hat, for I had the pipe, whose crater being long extinct was likewise filled with snow. I entered, and stood dribbling on the mat, rather dazzled with this sudden transition from the post-office at Dolanog and the nine-mile boy to the first-class hotel. A boots came and inspected me, and I wondered how much he thought I was worth for a tip. It was wrong in me to think thus, for the next moment he did me the most humane service of lending me a coat, instead of my own sopping vestment. So I

called for two poached eggs and tea, and asked how far it was to Bala.

"Fifteen miles, sir," said some one in the office.

"Can I walk there easily?"

"What!"

"Can I walk there?"

"Gracious me, no! You have to cross the Berwen mountains," said one.

"And there will be big drifts by now," said another.

"Besides, there is no moon," said a third.

"And there is nothing but a very rough track, and a precipice sheer off that," said the first again.

"You have no faith!" said I.

"Look here!" said one of them, coming forward, presenting me with a little guide-book open at a page. "It describes the road as it is in *summer*. You read it, and then think about whether you'll go."

"I will read it to-night in Bala," said I, placing it securely in my rucksack.

So I betook myself to my poached eggs, and gazed from the windows out into the twilight on the dismal snowstorm falling into the black waters of Vyrnwy Lake. This great piece of water, which is five miles from end to end, is the artificial product of a flooded valley. It is the Tivoli of Liverpool, and both water-works and hotel belong to the corporation of that city.

Day dies much harder when it is snowing. I suppose it is because there is so much white

about. Anyhow, it was by no means dark when at half-past five of the clock, having tipped the boots with cringing obsequiousness more than I had paid the postmistress of Dolanog in the fulness of my heart, I sallied forth from civility.

As all scene-gazing was out of the question, and as the road was absolutely flat for five miles while it followed the lake—for my ascent to the mountains did not branch off till the head of the lake,—I set to work to recite Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" to myself. Except for an old gentleman who crept silently past me on a tricycle of very ancient date, I saw no one on that great and dull high-road that leads round Vyrnwy Lake. For a few moments the snow ceased, and by that weird grey light that seemed born not of the sky but of the earth, I caught a vision of great hills like flying buttresses descending into the lake, with snow and desolation and smoking cloud upon their shoulders, and I was amazed at my stupidity in wanting to cross such things at such a time of night. But the snow soon came down again abundantly, and blocked out my future. About some thirty stanzas into the Third Canto of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" I arrived at my point of departure from the main road. First of all, I plunged into an avenue of dripping trees, dark as pitch, while a swollen river that I could not see roared past me on the right. It sounded uncomfortably close, but I kept up against the bank to my left till after a bit I dropped the

river away to the right and got to more open country. "Ah," thought I, as I ground my way up the hills and felt the snow go deeper and deeper, "now I am in a wilderness!" I had scarcely thought thus when I became aware of what seemed two red eyes glowering out of the darkness above me. On arriving at these orbs I discovered them to be embers that glowed through a heap of old kindling whose energy was becoming extinct. They were under a penthouse cover by a square stone building. I called out three times to see if any one were within, and at last on hearing a voice (though knowing not whence it came) this cryptic conversation ensued—

"How far is it to Bala?"

"Tobacco!"

"How far is it to Bala?"

"Oh, good bacco."

"What is good tobacco?"

"Yes, indeed, bacco very good."

"Do you want some tobacco?" (This in Welsh.)

"Yes, indeed, Tad Mawr, I want bacco."

"I have only one pipeful," said I, thinking of my own needs.

"That will be enough," replied the voice, thinking of his.

Feeling round the stone building in the direction of the voice, I found it issuing out of a burly head that was projected from a kind of long open window. The next instant the light of a lantern shone out, and I saw into a kind of barn

half full of hay or bracken. The lamp had been lit by a woman. Both she and her husband were fully dressed, and were apparently spending the night here for the looking after of mountain beasts in the snow. Anyhow, their night equipment was a simple one. When the pipeful of tobacco had been transhipped—

“How far off is the precipice?” said I.

“Oh, just a little farther on you shall fall over it when you keep to the left.”

“And if I keep well into the right I shall be safe?”

“Yes, indeed—mind you don’t tumble off!” and he put the light out, and I heard him bound into his depth of security and comfort.

Now, strange as it may seem, snow is a most companionable thing. The whole of this stretch from Llanwddyn to Bala, though I believe it lies over one of the wildest regions of Wales, and though it was dark and moonless and snowing, and though I knew myself to be set in the middle of many unknown dangers, I felt not the least atom lonely, and both lonely and awed I have often felt on a broad high-road at night, where I could suspect no dangers.

At last I came to what appeared to be the highest point of this long pull up. Here I stood still and looked round and wondered where on earth I was. The snow had now entirely ceased to fall, and above me I could see the stars shine brightly out of the deep black heaven. Far down below me on the left sounded the voice of a cata-

ract, and a great undulating vastness of white without shape or shadow marked all I could see of the Berwen Hills. It seemed to me that there was a wonderful solemnity here, and though this proceeded from the evidence of my eyes rather than my ears, it was as though someone was playing a great organ. And the symphony was not one of deep rolling notes and chords shattering and reverberating, but a small sweet air, insistent and perpetual in the recurrence of a simple theme, with now and then high fluting notes and now and then low mournful ones. The feeling was that it was a very great organ and capable of a tremendous volume of sound, but that now it was asleep and its performer drowsing over the keyboard, so that it breathed but the voice of a dreaming.

And now the way descended all the time, and I put my stick through the bracings of my rucksack, and pulling it tight against my back, ran for four good miles. The track led me right down into a gorge, and from thence into the side of a very dark valley with trees on either side of the road. At about half-past ten I crossed the end of Bala Lake, just as the tawny moon rolled up out of the valley of the Dee.

When I got to Bala town, after inquiry, I made my way to the Aunt of the Maid of the Inn at Berriew, where I had supped with the aquatic children. After supper I made my way to the kitchen, having propitiated the eldest son with the gift of a cigarette card, and told Mrs Jones

that her niece had recommended me to go there. "I have no niece there," said she.

"But," said I, "you must have, or I should not have been here now."

"Well, I haven't!" said she with great emphasis. "And that is not the writing of any niece of mine, so far as I can remember."

"Then show me photographs of all your nieces that I may identify," said I, for people in this station of life always have plenty of photographs of all their relations. When I had found the right picture, and luckily at the same time remembered the name of the girl, I submitted both my facts to the Unbelieving Aunt. Then she said that it was quite impossible that this niece should be at Berriew, as she had heard from her in Shrewsbury a year ago. What can one do with a mind like this? It is this oyster view of life, which sees the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and God and His angels too, through a crack, and shuts that crack up when anybody approaches, that is unfortunately so characteristic of many of the Welsh, from which cause springs that vindictive bitterness of feeling that the Chapel has for the Church in Wales.

"Where are you off to now?" said the little maid who stood on the step to see me away at seven o'clock in the morning.

"To Llanfairfechan," I replied.

"Where is that?"

"Near Bangor."

“ Oh, you won’t get there in a week,” she cried.

“ You have no faith,” said I. “ I shall be there to-night.”

Llanfairfechan is about fifty miles from Bala. But I thought that by going straight across country I could get there in something less than forty. As a matter of fact, by the way I took it turned out to be thirty-seven.

It had been snowing a good deal during the night, and the road out of the town was sloppy and dismal and discouraging. All the more so as the sky was grey and threatening, and there was no view. A mile or two farther on, where there was little traffic, and the night’s white work lay a soft two inches over the hard lumpy incrustations of the day before, I saw two pairs of small footprints going from me. A little later, right in their path, I came across a large signature which thus announced itself, “ DAVID JONES.” In another half-mile I saw a boy and a little girl trudging on in front of me with a satchel full of school-books between them. As I came abreast of this couple I shouted out, “ Good morning, Davie ! ”

The children stopped and looked at each other a moment, being obviously overcome with my clairvoyant powers, and then, without a word, the boy dashed through the snow-laden hedge into a field, pulling his sister after him. I made no doubt that they had mistaken me for the Devil. Therefore, a little way farther on I wrote in the snow with the point of my stick “ DIAWL,” which is the Welsh equivalent for our common

enemy. A little farther than this I left the road and took a rough track which crosses a range of hills that lie between the Bala district and Pentre Foelas. Thus I should save nearly five miles, for the road goes round by Cerig-y-Druidion. The snow was soft here, and the place being very uneven was full of little drifts. High up it was knee-deep very often for a long way, so that I was beginning to get rather tired of walking in the snow. But now the sky was brightening up, and I saw a little patch of blue. There is an old saying which decrees that if you can see enough blue sky to make a pair of breeches out of, it is going to be fine. So I watched this patch with great anxiety, being convinced in my heart, however, that with care I could make small-clothes for a little lad out of it. Nor were I and my proverb wrong, for soon came not only blue sky enough to have clothed a mountain but the sun himself, and all the beautiful snow-bound hills lit up and sparkled. It is marvellous what a difference the sun makes on one's spirits when he comes out.

In a curious hollow in these hills I found a frozen stream surrounded by a little dwarf wood. And every branch and twig of this was decked and hung with either icicles or snow, and stooping my head low I looked through such a vista of fairy splendour to the blue sky beyond as made my blood tingle with the joy of beholding such a lovely thing.

Somewhat farther on, round the elbow of a hill,



BALA COUNTRY.

I came in sight of some cottages in a distant hollow, and at the same time into sound of the call of a plover. The bird seemed to be in high feather, for the call was one that betrays festivity in the heart of the peewit who owns it. As I am sometimes fond of calling birds, I placed my rucksack in the snow under the hedge and started to imitate him. We had soon established an understanding with each other, and though the bird seemed to be approaching, he was doing so with cautious slowness, for I ventured to peep once or twice but I could not see him. So I let him blow his pipe alone for a little, making believe that I was grown sulky with his saucy caution, till at last on his coming closer I let out a most plaintive “pee weet!” At that moment I saw, sneaking round the corner, with every observance of cunning and stealth, not a lapwing but a small boy. I don’t know which was the more surprised at beholding the other. At the moment I could not think what was the Welsh for peewit, so for a while we two human birds stood and stared at each other; then I bethought me—“Lle mae’r cornchwiglan?” (Where is the peewit?) I asked. From his pocket he slowly drew a very ordinary whistle that lacked a pea. It was far the best imitation of a plover I have ever heard, and I told him so, but he on his part was so disappointed that, instead of congratulating me on my performance, he went away on the verge of tears. I therefore made no doubt that in his other pocket was secreted a catapult.

The next hill commanded a most glorious prospect, and here at last I saw old Snowdon and all his venerable horned brethren, with the sun upon their ermine snows and the shadow blue and hazy upon their sweeping flanks and craters. It was a sight to make one breathe deep and praise God for all creation. What a thing it is to climb a hill and put a great valley below you, making you as it were a Lord of Creation, and it your footstool! Hereabouts were several mountain ponies standing fetlock deep with their heads bowed and hoary snow frozen to their shaggy manes. From this place I struck straight for Pentre Foelas, which I could see in the distance. Coming on to the plain I passed two farms that bore unmistakable signs of antiquity and nobility. The one I was closest to had a fine old walled garden and a gate-house in the perpendicular style, but whose sometime haughty portal was now blocked by an impudent wheelbarrow which had even the absurd impertinence to be lying on its back.

I soon came into the highway again and entered Pentre Foelas at a cross-roads. Here were standing two police constables and a small crowd of people. When I made my appearance these folk seemed much diverted, and while I stood and turned to gaze upon the hills I had just crossed, the two limbs of the law came sidling up and prowled suspiciously round me. Murder was in the air, and they evidently considered me as cutting a very likely figure as felon. I let them have a

good view and then I entered the inn and called for bread and cheese and cider.

I had determined to walk from here to Llanbedr, and then cross the mountain that lies between there and the sea. I could trace on my map a sort of road or track that went from Llanbedr to the top of the ridge and then entered at right angles the remains of a Roman road leading from north to south along the chine of this hog-backed hill. It seemed to be marked here more as a matter of antiquity than as serving any practical purpose. But I have always great faith in Roman roads when they are out of the way and have not been tampered with by enlightened people. At any rate, part of it was walled and seemed to end in a gateway. From this point there was four or five miles of trackless country down the other side of the mountain into Llanfairfechan. A more or less winding footpath was marked in the neighbourhood, but I knew that it would be lying too far beneath the snow for any purpose of mine. So when I had finished my lunch I laid off three courses on the map and trusted to luck and the virtues of my compass to get me to my destination. Then after having purchased and despatched a pictorial post-card I left Pentre Foelas and the people who were looking out for the murderer behind me.

Getting up on to the high ground again I had a most wonderful view of the Welsh mountains from Snowdon to the old bluff I was going to cross that night. The air was very still and

frosty, and over the valley of the Conway hung a thin blue haze of smoke which seemed to make the old kings of Wales beyond look all the more grand and silent. When one looks at a dangerous thing on a calm day, such as mountains in the snow, or a sea full of treacherous currents, or the crest of a volcano when only steam is issuing forth into the placidity of morning, there seems to come from them a fascination like a spell of witchery that draws with all-compelling vehemence. Thus, when I looked at my old lump of rock, did I yearn for the time that night when I should cross it.

It was a quarter past five and growing dark when I got to Llanrwst. Here I partook of what the restaurants fondly call "a plain tea." I also sent a telegram to my Fairy Godmother predicting my arrival at ten o'clock. Then I set off again into the night, with twelve miles before me and twenty-five left behind. To my unbounded joy the sky was still clear, for it was freezing hard, and the stars were bright in the sky. But this great dead-level, luxurious road that I had to traverse for the next six miles, though it was free from snow and equipped with every convenience for the traveller, wearied me to death, for my heart was in the highlands. When I had passed the great aluminium works at Trefriw I fell in with two Scottish mechanics, and we discussed the merits and demerits of the Clyde navigation companies, for this and the shortcomings of their employers were the only things that seemed to

interest them. They were worthy fellows, though marvellously circumscribed in their views. Anyhow, we all arrived at an inn at Llanbedr, where we pledged each other in glasses of sherry. Here I entered the parlour to make a last survey of my way over the hill. I had not been there more than five minutes before three men entered. One of them was much more conspicuous in his bearing and general appearance than the others. To him, therefore, I addressed my remarks.

“Do you know Cae Coch and the Roman road going south which is walled for half a mile and then ends in a gateway?”

“The Gap of Two Stones,—I should know it,” said he, and he gave a knowing wink at his companions.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because, young man, I own all the land just about there.”

“That is very useful,” said I, “because with your permission I shall cross your property to-night on my way to Llanfairfechan.”

At this the other two set up a loud laugh, but he looked very serious.

“By gummy!” said one of them. “There’s a rum ’un for you!” and the other said, “I’ll lay any man two drinks he doesn’t leave this house when Mr —— tells him something about it.” But Mr —— said, “Though it’s my own land, and I know every inch of it, I wouldn’t cross there on a summer evening, let alone now.”

“Sir,” said I, “either you have no marching

compass or you have no faith. Look here," and I took my compass out of its little leathern house and placed it on the table, shading it with my hand so that the radium points emitted a faint violet haze. This seemed to impress the company, for one of them shouted into the other's ears, "By gummy, there's a rum 'un for you!" and the other looked as if he were prepared to lay drinks in any direction. But the third looked still more serious. "There's a big marsh up there," said he. "If you get into that you won't get out again." "By gummy! he won't," said his friend.

"Come! young man," said Mr —, for he alone seemed to take my proposition seriously. "There's snow to your middle up there, and there will be no moon; have a drink with us, sleep here, and go round by the lower road in the morning. It is nearly eight o'clock."

"So it is," said I. "Gentlemen, I must thank you and bid you good-night."

But nobody returned my salutation. Mr — shook his head solemnly, while one of his friends exclaimed, "By gummy! there's a rum 'un for you!"

And so at last I felt the push of the hill at my feet and the pull of it at my shoulders, and up I went in high spirits. The houses of the little town kept me company for some way, but at last I was out in the open once more breathing the fresh free air, and feeling at my heart all the nobility of independence. After the lights of the

valley had all vanished away below me, and I began to think that I must be within two miles of the top of the hill and the Roman road, I came to a very puzzling fork in the lane. As my little electric lamp, which had fallen ill and would not light, had recovered its health under the surgical treatment of my own hand, I shone it on to the map, but I had rather lost my position, and I mistook this turn for another, and so took the left branch of the fork. By the weird glimmering of the snow I could tell that the country was very wild. Right in front of me in the starlight loomed the great dome of Drum, and I began to be afraid that I had taken the wrong turn. But I pushed on a little farther and caught sight of a lantern glow which seemed to proceed from some farm buildings, for it moved backwards and forwards in a circumscribed area. This track that I followed led me to it, and rather abruptly, for I walked into a gate without seeing it. Climbing this and entering the yard, I saw a man with a hurricane lantern going into a stable. So I went up to him. When he turned about and saw me, I believe he thought that I was a spirit. I had been taken for the Devil in the morning of this day, and for a murderer at noon, so I was not surprised now when he smote his brow with the back of his hand and cried out, "Duw Anwyl Mawr!"

"Where have you come from?" said he in Welsh.

"Bala," said I.

"With the train?"

"No, with my feet."

"Tad Mawr!"

"And I am going to Llanfairfechan."

"*Llanfairfechan?*"

"Yes."

"*To-night?*"

"Yes."

"*Llanfairfechan?*"

"Yes; what is the matter with you?"

"Well, what is the matter with *you*, I'm thinking."

"I am perfectly sound, thank you."

"*Llanfairfechan?*"

I assured him once more that this was my destination. He was a tall strong man, with a deep black beard and keen kindly eyes. He now stepped between me and the door, as though to intercept my egress. "By the dear God, you shall not go there to-night."

"I am sorry, my friend, but I must."

"No, you shall not; you shall have the best room and the best bed in the house; but you shall not cross the mountain to-night, for you would be surely lost, and guilt would be on my soul."

Just as I was preparing an answer the door of the house opened, and let out a long flood of light upon the snow beyond the yard. And a little girl came out, and stood and looked across the darkness to our lantern in the stable. She was only a tot, but I could see her pretty little face and the

light in her golden hair, and her eyes big with wonder at the noise of a stranger.

"Father!" she called out in soft pretty Welsh.

"Yes, little one," he answered. "Wait a moment for me, sir," and the good man was gone to the side of his daughter. But I dared not wait now. I slipped quietly by the out-buildings and climbed the gate, and was away again in a minute. However, I shall always remember this man as one of the best and most hospitable I have ever met.

I now ran back to the fork in the lane, and took the other direction. In about two miles I attained the end of this lane, and got into the walled portion of the Roman road. The warm red glow from a window in Cae Coch farm was on my right, and I knew that this was the last light I should see till I picked up the lights of Llanfairfechan. So when I turned my back upon Cae Coch I felt like one who has burned his ships. The snow was very deep here, and drifted up nearly to the top of the left-hand wall, so that even keeping up to the right-hand wall it was over my knees at nearly every step. But the air was so fine and the night and stars so inspiring as I plunged on and on that I did not grow weary. I had come to notice that every time I flashed my little electric lamp to look at the map, a weird husky noise invariably took place in my neighbourhood like the sound a broom makes when it sweeps aside dead leaves. It was a curious thing to stand quite still for a moment till the great silence of the stars

and the night and the snow almost crushed you, then to turn on the little electric light and hear at once this mysterious noise like a spirit evoked. I am very superstitious, and so, as I always carefully cross out a magpie with my left foot, I took care always to take off my hat to this noise when I heard it, though I knew it was only caused by the mountain sheep hurrying off, terrified at the light. A gap indeed!—but of what beside the snow and night I could not see. Yet did those Two Ancients of the Stone Age, although invisible to the eye, lend the awe of their name and presence to the spirit. Here the walls were enormous both in height and masonry and did not seem to me to serve any particular purpose. However, they now ceased, like the finger-tips of the outstretched arms of civilisation; and there seemed an end of all things—a real abomination of desolation. I think I have observed before that snow is a most companionable thing, otherwise I am sure I must have felt lonely in this place, where all sign of a track was lost in unknown depths of snow.

I got out my compass, and waited till the little radium points coincided, then I shaped my course on a star, and commenced the last stage of my journey. I had hardly gone two steps, however, before I tumbled head over heels into a drift, in whose bosom reposed a gorse bush. When I had emerged from this I held more cautiously to my way.

At last I came to a wall, and not only to a



THE GAP OF TWO STONES.

wall, but a stile in that wall, which meant that I was well on my course, and must have struck the footpath. Looking about me, I could see several rounded heights and eminences, which all looked very close. But nothing in distance is more deceptive than the crests of hills at night. The only test I know is to watch as you proceed how the stars move in relation to the hill. If there is very little apparent change of position, the hill is a long way off, if otherwise *vice versa*.

Descending on the other side of the stile I held on my old course, but I had not gone far before I felt the ground quake and shudder ominously beneath me, and a dull noise of cracking ice came to me. Then I bethought me suddenly about the words of the man at the inn when he warned me of a bog that was dangerous. I recognised at once that it must really be the source of the little river that flows through Llanfairfechan, and therefore it had only half-frozen. So I walked due north for some distance, and then altered my old course two points and went on again. After a time I came to another wall, but no stile this time. As I climbed over it I suddenly sighted what I took to be a bright star, but as I looked, to my astonishment, it went out. In a few seconds it reappeared, and in another few it went out again. I could not think that any star possessed such sober and regular habits of scintillation. So I flashed my little light on to my map, and lo ! I had been looking straight at the eye of a lighthouse on the north coast of Anglesey, and I knew

that I was dead on my course. A sailor would scoff at a landsman who navigated himself by compass and then did not know a lighthouse when he saw one. Now, when I looked over the lower darkness, that I knew must be the sea, I could make out many a tiny point of light creeping on, outward or homeward bound.

At the bottom of this wall a little river was running. It did not appear to be either very broad or very deep, and so I prepared to cross it by the big stones that were sticking above it. But when I had placed my foot on the biggest I discovered too late that it was covered with a film of ice, and that my boots had nails in them, so losing my balance I flopped into a pool. After this I came to a very steep descent, and right below me, like a soft radiance, I saw the glow, though not the lights of Llanfairfechan. "I ought to be striking that lane where my course is laid to," said I. I had hardly uttered this sentiment when my legs flew from beneath me and I found myself bumping down a steep slide. When I recovered my normal posture I found that I was in a cart-track, and in another five minutes I was in the lane. After that I lost no more time but ran with all my speed, and reached my destination at half-past eleven.



ANGLESEY COASTWISE

IN ANGLESEY.

Up the winding Alaw
Where the marshes open free,
And down the winding Alaw
Through the sandhills to the Sea,
You shall find as pretty corners
As ever you may wish,
 And as plump trouts
 And tasty trouts
As ever graced a dish.

There are reeds, and there are irises
And king-cups half the way,
And such a show of wild blooms
Not seen in many a day.
And the snipe start up before you
At a thousand little springs ;
And the duck rush by you break-neck
On their rapid whistling wings.

When the sunlight strikes the mallard
In the Spring of the New Year,
And the shelduck, and the shoveller,
In their merry painted gear ;
And the yellowhammer's mating,
And the gorse its wealth has told ;
Then the river is a miser
Of reflections all of gold.

If you listen after sunset
When the West is dimly red,
You shall know the Little People
And the witches are not dead.
There are whispers strange and thrilling
In the fenland, on the Lea ;
And far away the trampling
Of the Horses of the Sea.

So you may go by daytime
Or you may go by night ;
When the sun is in the marshes
Or the ducks are on the flight ;
Or in the early morning
When the curlews flee the shore ;
Up and down the Alaw
... You shall never wish for more !

ANGLESEY COASTWISE

An account of an expedition round Anglesey in search of a
house-boy in February 1914.

It was in February, the only month in the year that does not go mad, that She whom I love said, "You will be wanting a house-boy."

"To-morrow I will go and find one," said I.

It was a lovely morning when I and my old dog Pharaoh set out. The sky was blue, and the sea was as calm as a lake, with great flecks of froth, and little waves at its edge sounding with a sudden clink, which showed that there had been frost overnight. We left Rhosneigr behind us, and started walking westerly along the shore. The village of Rhosneigr is an example to all humanity how corrosive are the two elements, money and visitors, to the generous nature of the Celt. Here you may see how greed hath overtaken a community, and each man hath built out his neighbour, and all for one horrible object—to bleed unhappy parents who come for their children's sake in the month of August. This is great pity, for one of the most beautiful

characteristics of the Welsh people is their love and kindness towards little children.

On a somewhat precarious bridge, founded on piers of cement, we crossed the river Crigyll. This stream has a story that is very ancient. It is believed that Phœnician ships, and Irish ships, and Danish ships have sailed upon it up into the land. Old people will still tell you that the prow of Arthur's boat stemmed its blue waters. In later times its name has been terrible, not from the river but the folks that lived on its shores. The Lladron Crigyll—Crigyll Robbers—were famous from Liverpool to Cardiff. It is the old tale. A rich ship is expected on a windy night. Lanterns are fixed to donkeys, which are driven over the sand-hills. Bodies coming ashore—and plenty came—were put away in the sand-hills. They were the safe repository of all treasure given up by the sea. Wreckers hid their victims there, and smugglers hid their kegs of whisky and bags of salt; for the lightest breeze would soon conceal the hiding-place, and no one but the hider would know where to dig.

Through these mounds I took my way to that lovely little strait which separates Holy Island from the Isle of Anglesey. It opens with a narrow channel, which immediately expands into a sandy lagoon, where there is safe harbourage for small vessels in any weather. And now begins a series of little promontories, little bays, little islands. The whole strait is charmed. It is not like a thing in ordinary life. It is not a man's world,

it is a boy's world—a setting for the child-mind. It is not too big for it to grasp, too small for it to despise. Grown-ups see nothing in it. But give a boy a boat and let him be here, and he will want nothing else.

Oh Anglesey scenery, what a secret thing you are, and how few come at the charm of you ! A man can be in Anglesey one day when the wind is blowing and the floods descend, and he will tell you that he was never in such a barren, wind-swept, God-forsaken hole in all his life. And he can be there when the sun shines, and he will tell you that he had no idea there was such a pretty spot on earth. The scenery, in fact, is as much a slave to circumstance as is the sound-box of a gramophone. And why ? It is, I suppose, because it is so small. It is as though, being the last stronghold of the fairies, they had formed it with their tiny hands so that it should not be too big for them to live amongst and enjoy. Its beauty depends upon its extreme delicacy ; and as the air is always as clear as crystal here, when the sun comes out everything shows up its colour to the fullest. But so delicate is it that at the sight of one ugly building its beauty shrinks and shrivels. It cannot stand anything big or ugly. That is why the only domestic architecture that suits the island is the little cottage with white-washed or pink-washed walls and whitewashed roof and red chimney-pots. The hideous and unsuitable buildings that the inhabitants are now persistently rearing all over the island blast the

peculiar beauty of the surroundings and shatter the elfin spell.

I followed westward up the straits till, passing a stone quarry on the right from whence all the local roads are fed, I crossed three fields and came into the little hamlet of Rhyd Bont, or Four Mile Bridge.

“Good-morning, Margeat,” said I to a tall dark woman of an extraordinarily regal and masterful exterior—she is indeed called the Queen of Four Mile Bridge, and rightly, for she settles all the affairs of the district, and against her royal pleasure no one dares lift a finger.

“Good-morning, Master Edmoon,” said she. “Come in till I get you a cup of tea.”

So I went in.

“Where are you going to with all that bag and baggage?” said the Queen.

“I am going to walk round Anglesey to find a *hogin-drwg*,” said I.

“Well, I wouldn’t do that if I was paid,” said she.

“Now, Margeat, you know that if I were to pay you, you would run round.”

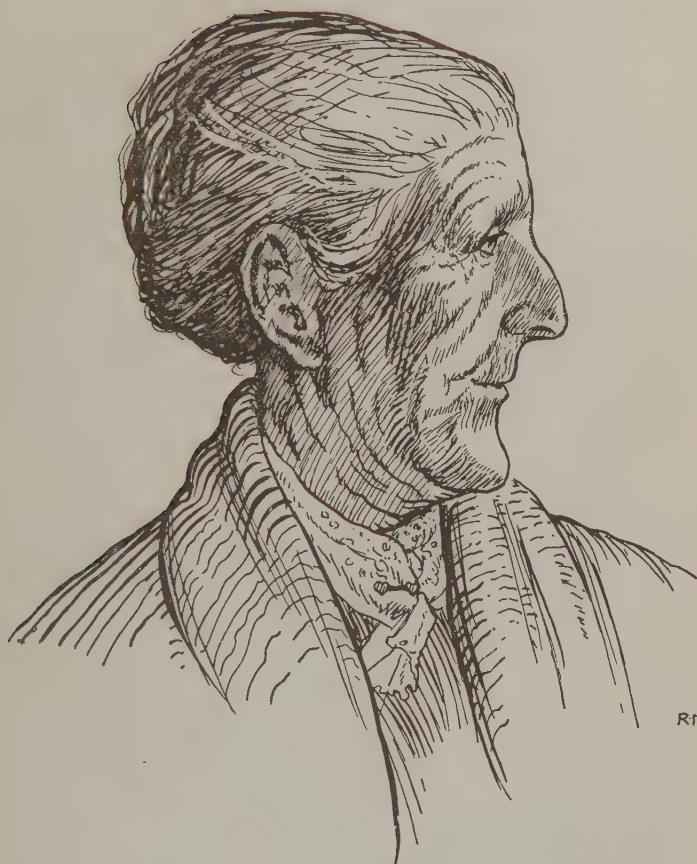
“Mercy on us!” she cried with a laugh, “I’m not so sure that I wouldn’t neither.”

Then I took my way by the road to Valley.

“Dear me!” said a good woman who greeted me. “Have you seen the first lamb of the season yet?”

“Yes,” said I.

“And had he his head or his tail at you?”



MARGEAT.

“He had his head at me.”

“Then you will be lucky all the year—yes, indeed. My first lamb had his tail at me. Dewks Anwyl, I wonder what’s going to happen !”

Crossing the main branch of the London and North-Western Railway, and immediately thereafter the big road that Telford made, Pharaoh and I went up a little lane that leads northerly. Soon we came out again on the bay that opens up the straits, and the mouth of the river Alaw. This is one of the longest rivers in Anglesey, and has quite the prettiest estuary. Below the last little village on its banks it widens out till it is more than half a mile to cross, then it suddenly brings up sharp to a passage of some thirty or forty yards in a defile of sand-hills, and, sweeping round a right-angled corner, goes away to the sea. At this corner is said to be a fathomless pit ; but within half a cable of the same is a ford so shallow that you can cross long before the tide is out in the estuary. So now, taking off my boots and stockings, I went over the ford, and holding Master Pharaoh well in check I traversed a prolific rabbit-warren and came once more upon the shore. Hereabouts are remains of what must once have been forest. These submarine relics are frequent round the west coast of Anglesey, showing that at one time the island deserved the name which it possessed before the coming of the Romans—of Ynys Dywyll, or Dark Island,—so thickly was it shadowed with trees.

It was not long now before I reached the farm

of Peniel Bach. A tall, dark young man was standing outside leaning against the wall, from which position he had been observing my approach for a considerable distance.

“ Good-afternoon, Owen Edwards,” said I in Welsh.

“ Brenin Mawr ! I know the voice—I know the voice ! ” cried he in English. “ But I do not know the man.”

“ No ? ” said I. “ But you knew the boy.”

“ Dewks Anwyl, it’s Master Edmoon. Come inside and have a cup of tea.”

Now the Welsh of the old school have the true spirit of hospitality, and they make better tea than any other nation on earth. So I was full fain to do as my friend bid me. And there were the mother and daughter standing curtsying in the dear old kitchen, whose furniture was scrubbed till it reeked of cleanliness, and whose spotless floor was criss-crossed and patterned with fresh green turnip-tops, and whose hearth was scrolled and draught-boarded with whitening. And oh, how homely was the smell of the new-made bread, and the kindly aspect of the old china, and the everlasting tick of the “grandfather”; which timepiece had doubtless continued its sermon uninterrupted since it last talked into the ears of a boy too careless to listen to it. When we had all exchanged congratulations, the mother and daughter went in search of the best tea-service, for the Welsh are not hospitable by halves ; the stranger must have the best of everything. (I wonder

will secondary-school boys and high-school girls when they become men and women have lost this God-like courtesy ?)

“Are you a great shooter still ?” said my host.

“Yes,” said I.

“Well, there’s plenty of shooting now. Go along with you, take my gun—but I’ve only got two cartridges.”

“I am afraid I must be going on,” said I.

“Ewks !” cried Mrs Edwards, filling up my cup for the fifth time, “you come here after fifteen years, and then you talk of going away. You must stay two or three days !”

“Dyn Anwyl, yes,” said my host.

“Well, I’ll stay one night,” said I. “Lend me your bike, Owen Edwards, and I’ll go off and get some cartridges.” I did this and had some sport that evening.

After supper, the best room having been prepared by now for my reception, we all sat there in state. The farmer, that good old man, also called Owen Edwards, had returned, and was in a fine humour for doing his part in the conversation. And the best conversation of the Anglesey farmer is the telling of stories, which he does with a vigour and word-painting that, away from his own mouth and language, description and interpretation are but flat substitutes for.

“Come,” said he in Welsh. “Take me a rhyme—Ma gini iar yn gorri ar ben y Penmaenmawr—I have a hen sitting on the top of Penmaenmawr.”

"I went to the bottom of Snowdon to call her down," I replied after the correct formula.

"She flew then and she flew then"—he swam his arms abroad, a smile came into his face, and his keen blue eyes devoured the fire-light—"with all her chickens."

"Right over to Ireland calling 'Good-morning, John,' to me," I finished.

"Oh, I see you are a very good Welshman yet," said my host senior, immensely pleased.

"Now," said I, "tell us a tale about the little people—the fairies—the Tylwyth Teg."

"Aha!" said he, "I have forgotten all about them—but let me see now!" He clenched his hands fast together and stared into the hot coals. We were silent a long time, and then he began with great intensity of speech.

"A young woman going to chapel. Very dark, oh very dark. The moon she only just to getting up. Tylwyth Teg comes springing out of the hedge, whispers into her ear and gives her his arm, and away they both going together. No one seen anything of them for a year. Till one fine morning she comes riding home on a milk-white pony, dressed like a queen, and Tylwyth Teg was with her on another milk-white pony, and dressed like a prince he was. And they were wedded man and wife.

"Her mother was proud to see them, and got the best of everything in the house for them, and gave the horses the best stalls in the stable, and made a great feasting with the neighbours that

night, and put the two to sleep in the best bedroom.

“In the morning she was up very early and got a fine breakfast ready, and waited for them to come down. But no one coming. So she went up and knocked on the door—tap-tap, like this,—no answer coming. So she went in, but nobody there. She went to the stable and the door was locked, but the milk-white ponies had gone, both.

“But there was a man going to work had seen them when the dawnlight was just coming. She and her husband-prince came riding like the wind—and stop all of a sudden! Tylwyth Teg gets off, and his horse goes away in the air. And she gets off, and her horse goes away in the air. Then he knocks three times on the earth—thump, thump, thump, like that,—and the ground opens and music comes out. Inside hundreds of little people are dancing, and tables are spread with the finest things to eat and drink. Then Tylwyth Teg gives her his hand, and down they go into the earth, and the ground comes together again as it was before. They never saw her no more.”

Then it was my turn. And when I had told my tale, the old man told another, and so we went on till at last I said, “Did you ever see anything of the smuggling, Owen Edwards?”

“No,” said he cautiously, “only hear about it.”

“What did you hear?” said I.

“When I was a boy I used to work for a man at Caer Gybi that had been a pirate when he was a young man. Pirates and smugglers, they were

all the same in those days. Yes indeed—plenty going on in those days.”

“How did they get the smuggle away from the coast?” said I. “Did they use carts or ponies?”

“Oh, all sorts. But most they used to bring it down, salt and spirit and all, on little sledges. And then old women would come round to the houses with little baskets and sell it. Ay, ay! I’ve heard my mother say that salt was dear in those days.”

Here the grandfather clock wheezed as if taking in such a long breath as would sustain its proclamation of eleven o’clock. On this we all gave salutations for the night and went to bed.

I was up at six fighting duck in the Peniel bog. The day was cold and drizzly, and it looked as if I was to have a wet walk. After breakfast I took my leave of all the family except Owen Edwards the elder, who conducted me off the property, where I shook hands warmly with the good old man and went off to the North. Crossing the last point which gives on the Straits of Holy Island, I came on to the lovely little bay of Tywyn Mawr, whose blue waters roll in from the Irish Sea. And they were blue now, for with the suddenness of Anglesey weather the sun had come out and all the mist and rain were gone. This bay is the first of a whole series of fan-shaped porths whose margin is of a clean fine-grained sand. You do not call them coves or coombs in Anglesey, you call them porths. They are features quite

individual to the island, and like the rest of the scenery I have endeavoured to describe, are as if the fairies had made them to sport by. One can think of mermaids here without any jar of anachronism or uncomfortable strain of imagination. The land seems to love the sea. It does not put up great barriers of jagged cliffs like some one trying to keep a thief away with a wall of broken bottles. It comes sloping down with its green fields and its old walls, and its blazing gorse and its scrubby growths, right to the shore. Then there is a belt of shingle like a symbol of covenant, and then the sand, and the seaweed, and the sea.

I was now looking for a cave called Ogo Fingham, or the Cave of Bingham, which gentleman I made no doubt had once a nautical reputation which has since faded. I disturbed many a mating duck and gaunt old curlew round the headland rocks, but I could not find the Cave of Bingham. On one little promontory, all feather-bedded with tight springy grass and the dainty little herb called thrift, I came to the site of an ancient stronghold. And then I came to the little porth of Trefadog. Here there was a farm whose house looked to be of sixteenth-century origin. A blue-eyed Celt with a tawny beard was tipping dung in a field hard by, and I went and accosted him.

"Dim Sisneg—no English," said he, and went on with his work as if a stranger were the commonest thing in the world. What between the courtesy of the Anglesey man and his great lack

of curiosity, he never stares. Heaven bless him in this respect !

“ Well,” said I in Welsh, “ can you tell me where Ogo Fingham is ? ”

“ I have lived here all my life,” said he, “ but I cannot tell you where Ogo Fingham is. I believe it is up in the North by Mynachdy.”

So I went to the house. A bright well-made boy with rosy cheeks and round blue eyes accosted me.

“ Oh yes, I will take you to Ogo Fingham,” said he in excellent English.

So we two went off the way I had come.

“ By the way you hold your hands you should be a telegraph boy,” said I.

“ I am one,” said he. “ My home is in Liverpool, but I come down here to spend my holidays with my aunt.”

“ That is interesting,” said I. “ So tha canst talk broad Lancashire, canst ta, and siarad cyme-reig at the same time ? ”

“ I can an’ a,” said he, laughing, with as broad a Liverpudlian *a* as I have ever heard.

“ What are these old mounds ? ” said I, indicating the remains of the fortress I have spoken of.

“ It is called Castell Madog. You know the farm is called Trefadog. So I suppose it was a castle belonging to Prince Madoc. It’s a funny place round here. When I was smaller I found a man’s skull on the shore there. It was whiter than anything when the waves rolled it up into the sunlight.”



R.M.H. 24

AN ANGLESEY FARMSTEAD.

We found Ogo Fingham, but the tide was too high to go in. It seemed to be a natural cleft, but the boy told me that it was said to go far up into the country, and somebody whose house was built at the end of it always had plenty of money.

Leaving the blue-eyed laddie I went away up the coast again. Endless little porths and elfin crag-lands out to sea continued. At Porth Crûg-mor a lady was kind enough to offer me and Pharaoh some refreshment. From here I shaped my course by an unusual monument in the island, the spire of a church: I say unusual, because most of the Anglesey churches have merely a belfry. This church turned out to be that of Llanrhyddlad. By the lich-gate in the wall are most spacious mounting steps which serve the purpose of a stile as well, for on the churchyard side is a broad stone stairway. Inside is preserved a pre-Reformation Sanctus bell. I ventured to put my fingers through the bars of its cage in the wall and tinkle it. Its tone was clear and beautiful. To hear in the twentieth century the speech of a bell that in the Middle Ages was wont to tell the people in the same sweet accents of the consecration of Christ's Body: to think how the ears that heard it and the hands that rang it have gone to utter nothingness, is a wonderful thing. But to know that as its voice still lives with us no whit altered, so does the great Sacrament that it once proclaimed, is a thing more than wonderful. As I stood in that lonely church, with the sunlight

coming in at the door, and the wind about the graves and grasses in the churchyard outside, I looked to the East and saw the emblem of our faith. And I wondered if any one of our great religious hecklers had been alone where I was, and thought as I thought, whether he would not have felt a very puny person.

Behind this church is a hill up which Pharaoh and I now made our way. It is the beginning of that north-west corner which might not inaptly be called the Highlands of Anglesey. From its bald heathery brow the middle of the island and the whole of the west coast down to St George's Channel appeared like a contour map made in high relief. It was not beautiful, for the peculiar scenery of Anglesey loses its charm when viewed from any height, when it has not the background of the Welsh mountains to throw it up; and to-day there were no hills visible on the Carnarvon shore. There is a higher eminence than this one on which I stood, to the north-east, called Garn. But as I am not one of those who delight to be on the highest point, or to touch the lowest level in any particular district in order that I may communicate the fact to my friends, I did not bend my steps towards the Garn. *Garn* is of course the same as the Cornish *Carn*, and means a heap. This north-west corner that I have called the Highlands of Anglesey has a scenery entirely differing from the places I had so far visited. It is a miniature Dartmoor, or perhaps better, a West Cornish moor such as lies between St Ives

and the Land's End. Shaggy rolling heaths with outcropping rocks stop short at high beetling cliffs over whose steep and ragged edges rivers cut off in their noisy youth go break-neck into the sea. The air is so inspiring here that one wishes one had more than a couple of lungs wherewith to enjoy it the fuller. Presently we came down by the cliff's edge into a little gorge where two streams were racing abreast over their bright gravel beds. A great chasm sank here to the beach. The stream on the higher side ran into a cleft it had made for itself, and descended in a comfortable cascade on to the shingle below. The one on the far lip of the ravine ran along the edge as far as it could, and then fell over the sheer blank face of the rock. But its fortune was curious, for as it leaped from the brim, the wind caught it in such a fashion as to convert it into spray, which seemed by some enchantment to pass into the air, giving to the eye a million shining beads and tossing rainbows as the sun and wind listed to play with it.

On a high rock-piled promontory I sat down in the shelter, that my pipe might be unmolested by the mischief of the breeze. Carmel Head, which is the corner-stone of Anglesey, stood up round the bend of the bay, and in this deep sea- niche lay an island dark with caves and crevices. A little out to sea the long lean-ribbed Isle of Skerries pushed its way up through the fury of the ebbing tide that curled in frothy wrinkles between it and Carmel Head. It has a lighthouse, and has possessed one for over a hundred years.

A Liverpool steamer bound for Cork came thrusting through the narrow passage, and its white funnel in the sun and its jet-black smoke gave just that happy note that makes a landscape laugh and live.

Descending the cliff to the shore by the island in the bay, we crossed a pebble-ridge that cuts off a little land-locked water from the sea. In this island there is a beautiful arch like a flying buttress, where, by contrast, one beholds the sea sparkling through a loop-hole of darkness. Hard by this there is a cave with a great pillar set in its mouth, from whose sounding interior the noise of the sea is magnified and made musical, so that it sounds like a wailful chant struck from the deep chords of the old harp of Wales.

From Carmel Head I laid a course by compass for Mynachdy farm, and came there in about a quarter of an hour. Mynachdy means Monks' House. For the place was originally built by a settlement of monks from the abbey at Conway. Nothing now remains of the ancient building saving green mounds. But in the seventeenth century the present house was built. Many a grim and ghostly story lurks about the place, and the house is in harmony with the dark sound of the name Mynachdy. On the outskirts of this haunted mansion Pharaoh did battle with two furious collies, so that fluff flew in great quantity.

"Get some water, you dunderheads!" I cried to the men who were grinning and looking on.

"Dim Sisneg," said one fellow.

At which I gave him Welsh to such purpose that he fairly precipitated himself after the bucket.

Addressing another in Welsh I asked, "Anybody in ?"

"Skipper," he answered. And he kept on telling me that the Skipper was at home and could speak English. For a long time I was at a loss to know what gentleman, servant, or official the Skipper might be, unless indeed it were the Captain of the household. Then I had it—Housekeeper he meant. This good woman entertained me most hospitably, took me over the house and gave me tea. The rooms are as magnificent as they are lugubrious. The kitchen is a grand specimen, with its capacious ingle-nook and its massive oak beams full of hooks and nails. The entertaining rooms are heavily panelled in a dark-stained wood, and the doors, which are double, are furnished with pillared jambs and portentous lintels. In the haunted room I turned and asked the Skipper, "Any bwgan ?" Bwgan is a ghost. But she shook her head, as if not wishing to enter into details on this point.

Mynachdy is half a mile from the sea, but a subterranean tunnel or cave has been cut right away through to the cellars, which have two approaches. One through an ordinary door, which no doubt in old days only led to a room where nothing offensive to the law was kept. But the one which communicates with the sea-cave has a way into it through the flooring of a cupboard in the hall, evidences of the trade contraband

that need no further comment. Some time ago they built up the cellar end of the cave, which operation laid at least half the ghosts. For perhaps when this sounding-funnel was open to the house, noises of the most appalling description were heard through the building day and night. One can imagine the megaphonic powers of a cave half a mile long, where a stormy tide flows and ebbs with all its thunder, and wherein seals fight and sea-gulls screech, and in whose reverberating funnel the noise of a steamer hooting far out to sea is picked up and delivered a hundredfold into the cellars of Mynachdy.

Leaving Mynachdy by way of the stream where the old monks kept and caught their Friday's meal, I came to Cemlyn, an exceedingly quaint and pretty little place where, at the brink of the bay, is a long curved pebble-ridge, land-locking a piece of water. So beautiful is its curve, and so cleanly swept, that at a distance it looks like nothing so much as a great white sickle that has cut the sea in two pieces. As I walked over this stony chine, marking how close the smooth flat pebbles neighboured each other; and as I felt and heard them champ and rattle beneath my feet, as only these sort of things know how to do, I thought that anybody born in this place would be struck in infancy by a strange glamour, so that in after life, away from the pebble-ridge of Cemlyn, they would miss it from their lives more than the highlander misses his hills and

the coast-dweller his sea. There is a mystery in a pebble-beach that I can never explain away.

Coming inshore again I crossed a field. The sun was setting now and the air was quite still, so that the whistle of some one coming up the road had its full value. And never did I hear such whistling except in a bird. I hastened to the hedge dividing me from the highway to see who it was, and lo! not a fairy but a farm boy. He had a face rather like a black-bird. I asked him whence he had learned such fluting. He told me that he had learnt it from no one.

“I love whistling more than anything,” says he. “I am always at it whistling.”

We kept each other company for some distance, and then I came into Cemaes. Here I entered an inn. They told me that a Woman’s Suffrage meeting—the first known in this place—was being held in the parish hall. So thither I repaired. There was a great crowd of people, and the lady was speaking in Welsh. But it was more like a prayer-meeting than any other gathering I ever attended.

This morning was clear, and fresh, and breezy, with a blue sky and little cherub clouds, and the sun striking the many-shadowed fastnesses of the Welsh mountains. Anglesey never really looks its best unless these Cambrian monarchs lend their masterful presence to its distance. When you see them they do not dwarf the scenery

but expand it. There they go, the whole muster of them, tossing their many varied forms from the bluff of Penmaenmawr to the far peaks of the Rivals !

Striking back a little down the road along which I had come I turned off to the left and made for the village of Llanfechell. I had not gone far before I overtook a man of middle height who was walking with short quick steps. His trousers of a curious check were bell-bottomed ; he carried a bag in his left hand, and his head was bowed. I got into conversation with him, and found that he was travelling in the shoemaking trade. A man who is a cobbler is usually a philosopher, though often a bigoted one, and this propensity to think, but to think in a groove, extends pretty generally to those who cater for our footwear.

"The time is at hand," said he. "Priests and landlords have had their day."

"Have they ?" said I.

"Yes, and thank God," he cried, shaking his fist. "We shall all have to give an account at the Day of Judgment. I shall be there, I know, but I don't mind rendering my account—for we are all sinful beings—so long as I can see the landlords judged. There will be no Lord *this* or Lord *that*," he cried, stopping and putting his bag down and shaking his clenched fists. "There will be only one Lord. Down with the landlords ! When Christ was on earth, he condemned the landlords and the priests. Do you

know what he would do if he were to come here again now ? ”

“ No,” said I.

“ He would condemn them again.”

“ When Christ was on earth, he left a greater teaching than the one you rave about,” said I. The man was growing so desperately excited I could not help getting heated myself. “ Do you know what that was ? ”

“ Certainly not,” said he, breaking into a string of texts in Welsh.

“ It was to condemn the narrow mind, and to teach men to love one another.”

At this he whipped off his spectacles, and having polished them hastily on his coat sleeve, plucked up his bag off the road, and started walking at a much greater pace than when I had found him.

“ I thank God *my* mind is broad enough,” said he, “ and since I have been saved I have loved my neighbour as myself. The Chapel is the great religion, it shows a man his God. The Nonconformist minister is the man who does his work the right way. The Church clergyman is kow-towing to the big landlord all the while. If you do not go to his church, he goes and tells the landlord. And then down comes the agent—the devil—and up goes the rent. What between a parson and a landlord I have seen a prosperous man sent begging on the roads to get relief for his young wife that was dying in childbed. My God, I have ! ” Here the poor man was overcome

by some emotion. Violent as his language was, I felt deeply sorry for him, for I guessed who that prosperous man had been. I thought he was going to break into another tirade, but he changed the subject. "Wales for the Welsh," he cried, once more halting to burnish his glasses. "They are teaching Welsh in our schools now. We shall go back to our old national character again."

"You will, no doubt," said I; "and build cromlechs and burn people in wicker cages, and worship the sun in the end."

"What!" he cried, bursting out again. "Do you think we should go on talking your English language? The language of the Conqueror? The language of the people that cut Dafydd ap Gruffydd in little pieces and hawked them about England for crows' meat."

"Dafydd ap Gruffydd broke his word and his treaty. I should not have thought for the sake of him it was worth while crippling the industrial opportunities of the whole rising generation of Wales by forcing them to learn a lingo that no one in the wide world outside your own little country understands a word of."

On this I could see the choler rising all up him. He was on the point of explosion when I bade him good-morning and took my way over the fields, at which his more generous nature suddenly came to the fore, and he wished me a pleasant walk.

It was a cromlech in an advanced state of decay

that I visited now. From here I followed a foot-path that led me back to Cemaes.

Once more I started east along the shore. Rounding the point I came on another delightful little bay, on whose farther headland is the ancient church of Llanbadrig. It is said that St Patrick, being sent by the Pope to convert the heathen in Ireland, stayed with St Eilian farther down the coast, and then came to this spot. Here he sojourned for some little time, for Eilian was very loath for him to go. So he persuaded Patrick to build a church. Patrick, too, loved Eilian and the bright air and sweet scene where he was ; but all the while the hammers of workmen were busy below in the little rocky porth making a ship. And one summer morning, before a breeze springing from the south and east, Patrick went over the blue sea to build another church in Ireland.

I think Saint Patrick would do more than turn in his grave could he see what has been done to his church here in Anglesey. We all know that with reference to old buildings the word "restore" is a masked word, and any one putting on disguise-piercing spectacles can read "destroy." But can any one conceive (think of it, oh daughter cathedral in Dublin) that a fane with such an ancient and glorious tradition should in these very days in which we live have for its portico a cement arch? Yet lo! a splendid consolation. At any time this may break into dismal cracks—as is the invariable habit of Welsh cement,—and

we shall then be able to peep at the work of the mediæval mason.

“Lo! the garden we have trod
Surely is the Church of God,”

says an old hymn-writer. He who comes forth from worship here must sing, “Lo! the garden we have trod is cement.” Ugly grey cement, with the swish marks of the mason’s trowel on it! But the masterpiece is the walls. Not only are the walls of this most ancient relic of British Christianity cemented, but, oh reader, they are spattered! In Dante’s ‘Inferno’ we do not read of the Hell of the Jerry-Builder and the Anglesey Architect. Perhaps it was because the place was not yet made. But I think rather that even the sublime fortitude of Virgil quailed at the thought of entering this place, and so he led the poet by another way.

From Llanbadrig Pharaoh and I kept inshore a little. The land once more is breaking into tubby hills rising like islands from the fields, covered with gorse, heather, and sloe. In about a mile we come to the sea again at a little gully called Porth Cynfor, or Hell’s Mouth. Hell’s Mouth is not a translation of Porth Cynfor, which means probably Chisel of the Sea, but it is a good name for this place. The name Porth Cynfor, I take it, is first cousin to Ganvor Cove in Cornwall. I have said, however, that Hell’s Mouth was a good name; let me illustrate it. The inlet bites sharp into the land as a tooth,

and like teeth pinnacle rocks rise island-wise from the sea and jag out and up from the cliffs and ridges that swoop incontinent to the water. In many a rift and cave the waves moan, gurgle, and roar, and overhead in place of the innocent gull the raven soars and croaks. But the place has a stern charm, a wild fascination, so that for an hour or more it held me from my walk.

At last my second pipe went out, and off we went again. Skirting Porth Wen, which is as pretty as Porth Cynfor is dreadful, I struck for Bull Bay. Up on a wild lea I accosted an old man digging a drain through a sopping field.

"Wet land," said I in Welsh.

"Ay, indeed," said he, "land very wet," and went on with his work, as if a stranger walking in the winter with a rucksack were the commonest thing in the world.

"You speak English?" said I.

"Yes, little."

"I think by your voice that you speak a good deal."

"No indeed, only a few," said he, smiling at my compliment, for the Welsh in these remote parts take it as a great compliment that you should suppose they spoke good English.

"I am surprised you do not ask what my business is here," said I, "for I am not a Welshman."

"Not a Welshman! Yes indeed, you are Welshman."

“No indeed, I am not. I am Saxon.”

“Dear me, no ! No Saxon can not pronounce the *ll* or the *ch*.”

“You are quite wrong,” said I. “Every Saxon, if he takes the trouble, can pronounce the *ll* and the *ch*. It is the *y* and the *u* that they cannot pronounce.

“Maybe,” said he, “but you are a Welshman all the same,” and he spat on his hands and went on digging.

We soon now came into the little place called Porth Llechog, which is the only settlement of any importance on Bull Bay, and will no doubt itself come to be called Bull Bay, as the English tripper does not favour unenglish words. At Porth Llechog is a hotel which bears a striking resemblance to a Nonconformist place of worship, and as though to set forth a pleasing variety of interesting styles, the architect, with astonishing versatility, has caused the garden walls to be massively crenelated and embattled with that everlasting friend of his that sticketh closer than a brother—Portland cement, with local characteristics. Poor little Anglesey ! when will they learn that at the aspect of such oppressive structures your beauty faints and languishes, and your soul becomes as paralysed as his who designed them ?

Between here and Amlwch I met a man whose nose had been bleeding. He was proceeding slowly, but with the sublime uncertainty of one who is drunk. When I came near, without turning

his head in the least, he addressed me, so to speak, out of the side of his face.

“Please to take the iron from my neck. I think in a minute it is going through my trounsters.”

I put my hand at the back of his neck, and between that and his collar discovered what felt to be the giant head of a portentous nail.

“Dewks Anwyl!” said I. “You must get up against that wall till I pull this thing out.” So I climbed the wall and he shuffled up alongside. “Mind to pull it straight, a hook was in the end of it,” said he.

I got at the thing and heaved up three feet of iron crowbar, such as they use about here for blasting rock. The point was very bent, as he had warned me. He said he had made it that shape that it should not “go through his trounsters.” But, considering the weight of the instrument, it is great wonder that it had not gravitated through his garments despite his precautions. Then he took and heaved it over the hedge. But the effort that this cost him brought on his sanguinary effusion afresh.

“Tad Mawr, I think must to put it back,” said he gloomily.

“Rubbish!” said I. “This bit of stone here will do quite as well.”

“No indeed, I think must to put it back,” he persisted doggedly.

So I got and put it down his neck again and left him to sprawl back as best he might, for there is no arguing with a Welshman, not even

in a circle, and an Anglesey man is as stubborn as a cromlech.

Amlwch is like a healthy man that has been stricken with paralysis. The limbs are palsied and dead. The head alone lives, and that is apathetic. In this place I was not a little surprised to find a smart, though small, commercial hotel. It went by the modest name of the Mona Café. But when the proprietor told me that he had been chief steward on a western ocean boat, I knew I should be cosy here for the night. Having tasted nothing since breakfast saving water-cresses and tobacco smoke, and it being now the hour of five, Pharaoh and I regaled ourselves and then went out into the town. Of all the industries that once flourished at Amlwch, tobacco is now the only one—except a little copper and ochre—that survives. So I went to visit a factory of the famous narcotic known as Amlwch Shag Tobacco. The manager who kindly took me over showed me first the tobacco as it arrives from Havanna. The leaf is moistened, then it is fed into a machine that cuts it to threads. After this it is put on the trays under which, like a camp oven, a fire is burning. A man turns and kneads the tobacco on this with his hands, and it afterwards sticks together much better than it did before.

“You seem to employ a good many boys,” said I.

“Yes,” replied my guide.

“What becomes of all the boys in Amlwch?”

“Oh, most of them come into the tobacco factories when they are nippers, and then go away to sea.”

“I am looking for a house-boy,” said I. “Have you any one to suggest?”

“Where do you want him?”

“At Rhoscolyn, the other side of the island.”

“Dewks no! you would never get them to leave Amlwch.”

“But you say that they go away to sea.”

“Oh yes, they’ll go with a ship, but they won’t go any other way.”

We had now gone upstairs and were in the room where the twist tobacco was being produced. In one place a machine was at work making it, and in another it was being made by hand. To make twist tobacco by hand entails the work of three boys and a man. The first boy smooths the leaves out on his knee, and then hands them to another urchin. That urchin stands on the twister’s left hand at the end of a long table like a shop-counter. The third boy winds a wheel. As this machine performs its simple function, the twister—who has fed a leaf or two in for a start,—with a flat oval of wood strapped to the palm of his right hand, rolls the leaf on the table in such a way as makes it coil to a uniform thickness. He then feels out with his left hand, and the boy who is standing on that side of him, and who has received the leaves from the first youngster, gives a leaf or two to the groping hand, which member reinforces the growing train of

twist tobacco. And so the pair of them move to the left up the long table, the twister never taking off his eye till the tobacco leaves have grown into a long stalk that is neither too fat nor too thin in any part. Like all skilled manual work, I found it most fascinating to watch.

When we had turned away from this performance, my friend opened a cupboard suddenly, and a sound of dismal groaning came out of it. It was caused by a kind of cannon-ball, which was kept perpetually travelling round the vortex of a funnel. Being dark, I put my head inside to see better, on which I began sneezing violently. It was a snuff mill !

“ Yes,” said my guide. “ That thing is always going round so long as the engine is going.”

“ How did you work the machinery before gas-engines were invented ? ” said I.

“ We had a horse going round outside,” said he.

Thanking him for his kindness, Pharaoh and I took our leave and went down to the old port of Amlwch. Never have I seen such a prospect of desolation. Vacant houses, vacant warehouses, old mills, tumbling to decay ; workshops, foundries, kilns, cracking and falling and mouldering ; and all through the midst of this horrible dissolution, through the narrow confines of the rocky harbour, comes that slimy stream from the copper mines, yellow with its burden of old iron rust, painting and coating everything in its passage through the harbour mud with the sickening tinge of ochre.

"Great heavens!" I cried in the ear of an old seaman who was standing by me, the only person in this great desolation, "how can Amlwch allow such mortification to go on? It will kill and eat out the whole place if they leave it."

"Ewks! they are all asleep, all asleep," said he. "I mind the time when there was more bustle here than any place in Anglesey. Ships coming with coal for yon old smelting works, and ships coming with general cargoes from Liverpool, and ships coming with old iron for the copper pools in the Parys mines, and ships coming again to take the copper away. There was life here in those days, I can tell you."

That evening I held a levee of house-boys, who all said the same thing as the tobacco manufacturer had prophesied. They would not leave the north of the island for the south—not above twenty miles away. But they would, any one of them, go in a ship to any part of the world you liked to name. I told them all what I thought of their lack of enterprise, but no flame of passion or emotion fluttered in reply.

The Suffragettes were here to-night, and they did me the honour of asking me to be chairman of their meeting, which distinction, however, I declined.

My premonitions of a comfortable night at the Mona Café were justified, and Pharaoh and I met, the morning of the fourth day of our stroll, full of vigour. Again it was below blue sky and

bouncing clouds that we set off from Amlwch. About half a mile on our way I saw a nice house standing back in a little wood, with all the blinds down. "Here is a house to let," said I, and seeing that I had a commission from a friend to inspect "suitable houses," I approached this manor; and tucked away behind it I found an old Gothic door surmounted by a very ancient crest. Behind this again was a farm, conjoined.

"Can I see over the house?" said I to the farmer's wife.

"Yes, and welcome," said she.

At the end we went into the big parlour.

"An English writer made a book here," said she.

"Which writer?"

"Charles Dickens."

"Indeed! What was the book called?"

"'The Uncommercial Traveller.'"

"That is most interesting," said I. "May I pull this blind up a little to see the room better?"

"Oh yes, the funeral is over now. I will pull them all up."

So then it was the funeral of a relative in a remote district, and not a state of "to let" that had caused the blinds to be in the descendant.

Taking the road again I went on a mile towards Llanelian, when up a little hill I saw two boys collecting road-scrappings. Getting abreast of these, and then turning suddenly on them, I cried out, "What's your name?"

Both boys together—

{ “Samuel Roberts.”

{ “His name is Samuel Roberts.”

It is not the first time I have had recourse to this trick. It is one that depends on Natural Selection, and is a test of the stronger-minded of two boys, Samuel Roberts in this case proving the more masterful character. I explained to Sam that I was looking for a house-boy, and I asked him if he would like to come to the other side of the island and be my house-boy.

“Yes, I’ll come,” said he, putting down his muck-scoop.

“Would you be prepared at any time to row a boat, land a fish, or sleep in a tent?”

“I wouldn’t mind in *fine* weather.”

“Bah!” said I, and left them dung-collecting.

Finding St Eilian Church locked, I went to the neighbouring little cottage and knocked. A very motherly old lady came to the door and asked me to come in and take a seat.

“I want to go over the church,” said I.

“Dear me, come in and take a seat first.”

These old Welsh women have a way of making you feel a sort of childish confidence in doing what they tell you. So I went in and sat down. The very atmosphere and arrangement of the inside of an Anglesey cottage inspires rest and confidence and a comfortable feeling that Time is quite an irrelevant thing to Life. At least I always feel like a little boy as soon as I enter an Anglesey cottage. The old lustre jugs and orna-

ments from Staffordshire confront you on the dresser. There stands the old grandfather clock, beating his time with huge solemnity and circumstance, an hour too fast. A round water-stone, blacked so much that it is conspicuous even in the dark, stands ready to prop the door open; and near it a large shell from the Pacific—for from the sea and of the sea come fifty per cent of the decorations of these little abodes. In the present instance it was the late husband who had been the “Captan.” In these parts the title of captain does not necessarily imply that the individual in question has commanded anything larger than a rowing-boat. But should he indeed have been master of any vessel of importance, his wife often shares dignities with her husband, and becomes Mrs Captan Jones. But we have wandered while we stared at the cottage walls; for our eyes were resting on an old faded sampler displaying geometrical beasts and ships, and angular birds, alphabets, dates and texts—all quite irrelevant. Neighbouring this a three-masted schooner is seen to cleave the waters of the ocean. Perhaps you may notice a striking caricature in oils of the worthy Captain himself as he was in the days of his youth. But you will certainly see a picture of an English king or queen, and a funeral-card, and a Roman Catholic print representing the Virgin emerging from a hubbub of rainbows, stars, moons, and cherubs. As likely as not, too, you will see a glass rolling-pin hung up by a bit of ribbon tied to its either ex-

tremity, or probably it will be a ship in a bottle, or a Calvary in a gin-flask. On the mantel-shelf will be a fine display of burnished brasses—candlesticks, bits of harness, door-knockers, fragments,—all shining like nothing else in the world. But the prettiest and the most homely thing of all that you will see is the old lady herself curtseying on the hearthstone. A few more years and these things will cease to be. The antique dealer and the superficial educationalist will have done their work. Then shall the jerry-builder frame the setting and the cheap milliner cut the jewel.

“You have a tad and mam, machgen i?” said the old woman.

“Yes, Nain, I have a father and mother.”

“And a wife and little childers?”

“Dear me, no, Nain. I am only twenty-five.”

“My gwr had had me six years then,” said she, shaking her head. “And a good lad he was, too,—but the sea had him in the end.”

So we discussed our families, and then we went into the church. There is a fine old treasure-chest here, and a wonderful instrument called dog-tongs. At one end of an expanding trellis are the tongs, at the other the handles. So that by grasping each handle and drawing them together the machine shoots outwards and the tongs grip the canine offender. There is a most beautiful rood-loft in this church. At the west end hung a picture that the old lady told me represented St Eilian. But my friend the Antiquarian has since informed me that it is one of

twelve Dutch paintings that came ashore off a wreck.

On the south side of the chancel we passed through a low door that led down three steps into a little whitewashed vestibule which farther conducted into a tiny cell or chapel. At the east end of this was a curious piece of furniture made of massive oak. It looked like a box that had pillars and panels, two of which last were missing.

"Get in there!" said she, pointing with her stick at this thing.

"Nain, I'm sure I never could; besides, I believe it is the shrine of the saint."

"Get in, machgen i—it is a wishing-box."

I doubt not that it was horrible sacrilege, but when a woman or anything resembling a witch tells me to do a thing, I always do it on principle. It was a difficult thing to get in, but she kept me going by belabouring with her stick the last part of my person that was in the recessional.

When I had wished, I came out again. For my own defence, let me say it—for I would be the very first to condemn any one who had done this thing just because it was "the thing to do," as is the creed of tourists and trippers,—I had done it because an old woman had artlessly given me the tradition of a holy man's virtue. And as I believe in my religion, so do I believe that my wish will come true.

When I had left this spot I ascended the hill called Mynydd Eilian. When nearly at the summit I looked back and saw Point Linas, that

came like a great lizard up out of the sea. There is a lighthouse on it, and off this point ships outward bound from Liverpool put off their pilots, and those returning home pick up these thrice-welcome people. Is there any sight in a trip to foreign lands more thrilling, soul-stirring, or joyous than the sight of the English pilot? As he comes up over the side of the ship on his little Jacob's ladder, the throb of the engines going ahead again seems music, and for the first time *all* one's fellow-passengers appear to be agreeable people.

On the top of the Mynydd I suddenly opened out a view that really did—although it is a trite thing to say—make something come in my throat. I will not endeavour to describe it, it is too sacred to my memory. But let any one who does not believe in poetry go up to the top of Mynydd Eilian and look to the east—over the bays, between the islands, to the hills.

This place whereon I stood was once a stronghold of Caswallon of the Long Hand, who expelled the Irish that had invaded and settled in Anglesey about the time of Good King Arthur, and a farm here still bears his name.

In a little field a man came up and spoke to me.

“Won't you come in and have a glass of milk?” said he.

“Yes, thank you,” said I. “I should like a glass of milk very much.”

In his little kitchen, or living room, which was spotlessly clean, as all these places are, his sister was taking the butter-milk out of the churn.

When her brother told her that I was a stranger travelling through the country, she at once set about laying a cloth and getting out the best of everything.

“Please do not put yourself out,” said I. “I only want a glass of milk.”

But she would not be persuaded that milk was good enough, and she must make coffee, and cut up bread and butter. So exceedingly hospitable are these good folks of Anglesey that if one did not stop them cutting bread and butter, I verily believe they would slay every loaf in the house.

And now the old mother came in. Very infirm she was, and she advanced slowly, leaning upon her staff, and looking at me with her shrewd old eyes, that were shaded by her white starched frills and little black bonnet. She sat down, and I drank my coffee.

Then, “What a curious cupboard,” said I, for its open door revealed a smaller cupboard almost hidden away in the shadow. “What is in that?”

“Oh, nothing, nothing at all,” said the old woman. It was the first time that she had spoken. As it seemed nothing was in it, I opened it. A little old brass tobacco-box was discovered. I had picked it up, and was going to examine it, when the old woman called out, “Indeed there is nothing in that, nothing at all.” The thing, however, was heavy as lead—or perhaps gold would be the better metallic simile. I hastily

put it back, and shut both cupboards to. It was not difficult to guess what was in it. In old days there were no banks in Anglesey, and the family treasure was put in all sorts of places.

“What do you like?” said I, as I stood in the doorway to depart.

“Grapes,” said the old woman without hesitation.

“I will send you some,” said I.

Crossing some fields, I found in one a great lump of stone hollowed in the top so that it looked as if some pivot in bygone days had worked therein. I built it into a wall, so that I might fetch it on another occasion when I had more means of conveying it away. “It never rains but it pours,” and in the next field I found a large implement of the Stone Age in a wall, and in the next field to that again I found an ancient British milling-stone. This last, which was lying in a stream, I built into another wall, but I carried off the implement.

I was now almost doubling on my tracks, returning towards Amlwch. I could have continued my journey round the island from Mynydd Eilian, but the fit took me to see the copper workings on Parys Mountain, for I could discern the big yellow pools in the distance. These hideous lakes are really only the waters of an innocent young stream that has been kidnapped almost at its birth and made to fill these reservoirs. The reason for its early seduction is of course

because it is rich—rich with copper in solution. Into these pools are tipped cartloads of decrepit old iron. The water is robbed by precipitation of its wealth, and runs off ghastly with rust, leaving behind it copper and a by-product of ochre.

When I gained the main road I saw a boy coming along from Amlwch wheeling a bicycle, whose both tyres were windless. I waited for him to come up, that he might tell me the orthodox way of approaching the copper workings, for till now I had been across country from Mynydd Eilian. But I might have guessed, if I had only thought that I was in Wales, that though he had lived all his life within a mile of the place, he had never been there. He had a broad face, and the freckles that were on it set off his honest blue eyes.

“It is Saturday, and the works are shut,” said he.

“It is always Saturday or early-closing day when I come forth to do any business,” said I. “What is your name?”

“Jones.”

“Of course. But what sort of a Christian name do you keep?”

“Arthur.”

“I thought so,” said I.

“Why?”

“What do they teach you at the County School?”

“Oh, everything.”

"I'll bet they don't teach you that 90 per cent of Arthurs have blue eyes and an open face."

"What is your name?"

"I'll soon tell you that, because I want you to take this stone home, pack it up, take it to the railway station and send it to me."

"Aren't there any stones where you live?"

"No, only rocks," said I.

So as he was going my way I walked along with him to his home.

"Is Wales going to be a great nation?" said I.

"Yes, I think."

"Then the Welsh boys must buck up and get to themselves three qualities that they have no idea of at present."

"What's that?"

"They have no enterprise, and they have no code either of morals or of honour. I can always trust a Welsh boy to promise me anything under the sun, but I can never trust him to do it. I can never rely on a Welsh boy to keep an appointment or to tell me the truth. And as for enterprise, why, I have only ever met one who would go out for sport in bad weather."

"The English masters in school say the same thing," said Arthur Jones.

"Why is it?"

"I suppose it is the way they have been used at home, you know."

By the village of Pensarn I left the lad with the breathless bicycle and my neolithic weapon,

and went off with the collie on the road to Moelfre. Passing through a place called City Dulas I thought to myself, "Everything looks prosperous here. I must be in the territory of a lord." And I found upon inquiry that it was so, and that I was in the domain of the Lord Boston. This made me think of my friend of "Down with the landlords!" and I wondered whether he would have discerned the difference as quickly as I did—the well-developed agriculture, the comfortable and satisfied look of farmer and cottager, the absence of suspicion in people's faces, the well-mannered school-children capping and curtseying. Towering upon my right now like a Gibraltar set in the land was the rocky fastness of Mynydd Bodafon, and to my left the pretty sloping lands going down to Dulas Bay.

It was beginning to rain, or rather to mizzle, when I got to the ancient Norman church of Hen Capel Llygwy. This little building is in a field off the road and stands open to the winds of heaven. It looks as if it should have a wonderful history, but I do not know it. Below the chancel is a little underground cell approached by steps. Within a few hundred yards of this is one of the finest cromlechs in Anglesey, its cap-stone being of stupendous dimensions. But its ancient glory is departed from it. One does not on beholding it feel that strange eerie thrill in one's bosom, that ghostly calling from the darkness of the Past, that unique sense of being face to face with History and the Ages—in a word,

that atmosphere druidical which only a cromlech can call up, because—because there is a railing round it. The museum, the caretaker, the notice-board, the railing, the guide-book, the picture post-card is the order in a descending scale of those things which butcher the sentiment of History. The only things I would rejoice to see in a museum are the five last-mentioned articles.

Through the drizzle I found my way to Moelfre. From Point Linas down, the coast loses its way of breaking into an eruption of little porths, and takes up the less original attitude of sloping into big bays. Moelfre, however, is an exception. It is a beautiful little cranny in the cliff. The sea comes into it, and then there is the road, and behind that the houses, and in the midst thereof spouts a waterfall. It takes its name, however, from the headland. Moelfre means Bald Place: in Cornwall we have Mulfra.

Entering the inn, I accosted the landlord, and asked him if he would put me up for the night, and he in turn went to consult his daughter, who was the managing spirit. She came and inspected me—a fine, masterful woman, with her hair in plaits. I repeated my need to her, and she said—

“There you are now!” and went away.

Presently she came back and said that a relative of hers up the hill took in visitors and would entertain me, and her little girl would take me up to the eyrie of that lady.

"I do not care to go to a resort of tourists," said I. "I either stay here or go on to Benllech."

"Well, there you are now!" said she, stroking her chin straight up and down and looking past me out of the window. Then she glanced at me again and said, "There you are now!" Unfortunately I was not the least sure of where I was in the graces of my lady of the land. But her next sudden remark assured me instantly. "I will put you up and make you very comfortable," and without waiting to hear my comment she whirled herself out of the room, and next instant from the bow-window of the bar-parlour, which interchanged furtive glances with that of the best parlour, I saw hands with dusters in them windmilling about, and gathered by the voices that she had turned out the whole household, young and old, to prepare that state apartment for my reception.

I spent some time that evening talking with the old men in the bar, and then went to bed, the good woman having kept her word splendidly and made me very comfortable.

I was away betimes with a little girl from the inn to see the place where the *Royal Charter* was wrecked, which, as every one knows, happened in the year 1859. Homeward bound for Liverpool from the Cape, she carried £300,000 of bullion, and most of her passengers were successful gold-diggers who were returning home to live upon the ripe harvest of their labours. It was blowing

a gale, but why the *Royal Charter* ever found herself so far off the track between Point Linas and Liverpool is, I believe, still a mystery. Some tell one tale and some another, but, howsomever, one terrible thing is certain, the *Royal Charter* went down in Moelfre Bay, and four hundred souls perished within bow-shot of the land. The rich gold-diggers, all of them, at the last moment, wrapped their wealth about them in belts, actual or improvised, and owing to this fact the people of Moelfre profited in no small degree. The birth of many a house hereabouts could be traced to Australian sovereigns. But they say that no luck ever came to those that had wealth off the *Royal Charter*.

"They are still finding sovereigns in the beach on the ebb of spring tides," the little girl told me.

"Is all of the wreck gone away," I asked.

"No, you can see some of it still when the water is low," said she.

From Moelfre I kept south with Pharaoh on the road to Benllech. Visiting the little church of Llanallgo to attend the service of Holy Communion I noticed there a pillar set up to those who had perished in the sea in the October of '59.

Farther along the road I saw a man in a blue jersey smoking outside his door, which piece of furniture belonged to a lodge at the end of a private drive.

"What house is that?" said I, pointing to a mansion up in the trees.

"That is Parciau," said he.

"Oh, indeed."

He must have detected in my voice that which said, "It doesn't convey much to me," for he cried—

"Parciau! every one knows of Parciau. John Bodfel of Parciau! The bwgan of Parciau! Dear me, you must live out of the world if you have not heard of them."

"Well, I do live out of the world, so I haven't heard of them. Who was John Bodfel?"

"Oh, every one knows of John Bodfel. He built that pigeon-house, and that big wall. And I've heard the old men tell that every man who built that wall only got a penny a day, and a leather penny too! John Bodfel was a hard man—Owks yes!—he coveted every one's land. He would never go away from Parciau without putting soil in his boots, so that whenever he went, even if it was in the King's house in London, he could say that he was standing on his own land."

"And what about the bwgan?"

"Indeed, I don't know much about the bwgan except that it was always rattling, and banging, and thumping at night, and making all sorts of noises. It was called the devil of Anglesey."

"Where is Ffynnon Allgo?" I asked.

"In that field yonder; the farmer at that little farm will show it to you."

So I repaired to the farmer and asked him if he would be kind enough to show me St Allgo's

Well. My friend the Antiquarian tells me that there is a Holy Well to be found somewhere near every church in Anglesey. The farmer turned out to be a dear old gentleman, and was very willing to show me Ffynnon Allgo. It was in the middle of a field. Three steps led up to the little stone enclosure where, round the pool, were ranged the old benches of stone used by the Faithful in the days before Edward VI. sat on the throne.

"It is a wonderful place," said the farmer, shaking his head slowly as he looked into the dark unruffled spring. "The water here never runs dry, no matter how hot the summer. Every one comes here when there is no water anywhere else. And again, no matter how hot the summer, the water is always cool here, and yet in the winter it is warmer than in any other place."

"How came there to be a bwgan at Parciau?" said I as we walked back.

"It is a bad story," said he.

"Was there a murder?"

"A murder? Ay, a horrible murder."

"In the time of John Bodfel?"

"No, I think it was his son. He fell in love with a girl on the farm and he promised to marry her. I've heard she was a very innocent child, and pretty too. And she was happy, for she loved young Bodfel. Some drunken blackguard dressed up as a priest and made mock to marry her and young Bodfel in a church one night with

candles burning. She didn't know, poor thing, but that it was a real marriage, and that she was Lady of Parciau. One night—I've heard them say how glum the dark was, and how still the air was, and no clouds in the sky, and yet the stars wouldn't shine on Parciau; and all the time there was like wind blowing in the trees and making a wailing all round the house and in the chimneys. And yet if you had let drop a feather it would have fallen straight to the ground. Well, on this one night there was young Bodfel and his companions drinking and shouting late into the hours, getting drunk,—mad drunk. But upstairs all alone, listening to the men shouting and brawling down below, and listening to the noises that were in the trees and round the house—which no wind made—this young girl was lying. And it was at the time when women pray that God will be good to them. Presently she hears the doors open downstairs and sees lights reeling upstairs. The house is full of the voices of these drunken men laughing and singing. And young Bodfel comes in, her sham husband, mad with drink too." The old man stopped and stood still, looking down and nodding his head slowly. "Yes," said he. "She was alone, expecting to be a mother, and he killed her. Well, they took her body out to sea in a row-boat, him and a few servants he could trust, and they hove her overboard, weighted heavy in her winding-sheet with iron. But next morning there was her body on the shore. They took her out again, but this

time she came back farther than the shore. She came to Parciau ! ”

This morning had been unusually warm and fine, but as I took my way to Benllech it came on to rain. I went into the hotel for a little lunch, and heard news that my old friends the Suffragettes had come, and were going to hold a meeting the following night. After lunch I sought out the cromlech of Tyn-y-gongl. One end of it is down, and it sits there up on the hill like a great toad. But it had no railing, so I enjoyed it with that peculiar joy that nothing but a cromlech ever fills me with. There is another one about half a mile to the south again, but it is hard to get at on account of the thick undergrowth that is about it. The sky had now gone into the most extraordinary extremes of colour—brilliant contrasts of purple and orange, blacks, greys, and mud colours, as the sun-rays were caught in bafflements of cloud. An odd end of a rainbow, as if this historic arc must be represented on such an occasion, posted itself irresolutely in the lethargic east, while twirling and moving, like witches’ cloaks with a howling gale racing underneath them, hailstones came headlong down the space between me and the clear-cut distance. As the stones buzzed past me almost parallel with the ground like spent shot, and cut, and lashed, and froze upon my face, I flew into as bad a temper as they were in, and heeded nothing till I got to Red Wharf Bay.

At a little cottage down upon the shore here

I was entertained most hospitably to a beautiful tea. And here I saw the first pretty girl I have ever seen in Anglesey. Welsh prettiness—we will not say beauty—when you meet it is peerless. A pretty Welsh face is like the song of an old bard—it comes like a storm upon you, and you never forget it.

Red Wharf Bay is the largest in the island, and it has a peculiar charm of its own, though Anglesey scenery is too small to make much of an “effect” when it opens its arms to the sea for more than a quarter of a mile. Coming into the main road that leads from Pentreath to Beaumaris I met two young women.

“Where is the Three Leaps?” said I.

“Down there by the entrance to Plas Gwyn,” said one of them. Coming to the field I saw three stones like boundary stones each twenty feet apart.

“Who was it that jumped those spaces?” I asked of a man and a little boy who were leaning over a wall.

“Indeed I don’t know, I think it was a giant. But *there* is a man who will tell you.” He indicated a postman. I have often found postmen to be sounder and more genial philosophers than cobblers are, and I have known in His Majesty’s Service of the Mails great scholars, historians, and antiquarians. The last person who spoke the Cornish language was *not* Dolly Pentreath, but the postman of Zenor, who only died quite recently.

“No, it was not a giant,” said this one, “who

made those big jumps, it was an ordinary man. Hundreds of years ago the hand of the heiress of Plas Gwyn was sought after by two men, sons of Ap Geraint. It was decided that who could make the biggest leaps with the pole should have her and Plas Gwyn too. That is where the lucky man jumped."

"A wonderful thing," said I; "but where is the fourth stone?"

"It is in the brambles on the bank over the other side of this road," said he.

And so talking of old things I walked with the postman into Pentreath. The sun was setting as we reached the village, and the little church—founded, I believe, by the father of the successful jumper—was making an end of calling people to come to even-song. I told the postman I was looking out for a house-boy, and asked him if he knew of a lad. He said he thought he did.

"Then," said I, as we reached the inn door, "bring him round after church, for I am going to service now."

"I thought English tourists who went on walking tours did not go to church," said he.

"I am not a tourist, neither am I on a walking tour," said I. "I respect the first day of the week as much as you do, and hold it no sin to walk on any day."

Later in the evening the postman came to say that the boy "he had in his eye" wanted to go to sea.

"Then," said I, "if the boy wants to go to

sea, he must go to sea ! but for all that I will come and see him."

So we repaired to his domicile. The cottage was such an one as I have endeavoured to describe before. The boy and his mother were drinking tea at a little deal table, and the grandfather and grandmother were sitting on each side of the fire. We all got talking away comfortably when I spied a curious old jug on the mantelpiece.

"That is a pretty old crock," said I in Welsh to the old man.

"Yes, I was inside of that once," said he, laughing.

"You were what ?" cried I.

"I was inside of that jug."

"He was such a little one," said the old lady, "they popped him in for fun !"

She became very interested when she heard that I came from Rhosneigr or Crigyll.

"I was born there at the little old mill by the railway station—Felyn Wen we used to call it," said she. Then she turned to the postman. "Tell the gentleman that my grandfather brought up twenty-nine children there, and three lots of them were triplets."

"Did they all live ?" asked I, for the thing sounded curious.

"Live ?" said she. "Yes indeed, they did live, and my grandfather got a prize at the Horticultural Show for them, and a good sum of money it was too."

"Did they give prizes at the Horticultural

Shows in those days for rearing children ? ”
I asked the postman.

“ *She* says so whatever,” said he.

“ I have done enough dawdling about,” said I to myself as I came out of this cottage. “ To-morrow I will do nothing but walk and get home at night.”

So the next day in the early morning Pharaoh and I headed north from Pentreath, walked two miles over the fine hard sand of Red Wharf Bay, and came up on to the Bwrdd Arthur, or Arthur’s Table. Hereabouts I found a Roman bead on a molehill. The sun was shining merrily, and the feeling of the road was strong in us both that morning—we could wait for nothing. Away we went down to Beaumaris and so along the Menai Straits. I suppose there are no such perfect views of hill and wood and sea all together in the whole of the British Isles as there are from about Beaumaris. But this side of Anglesey I like the least. Soon we hove in sight of the Suspension Bridge, that most glorious of all bridges. Surely no one can look at it and go away uninspired. For I think the highest thing that can be said about any building can be said about the Menai Bridge ; it is in the heart of a very beautiful scene, and itself makes the beauty of that scene perfect. The cliff of Anglesey drops down into the woods, into the sea—the mountains of Carnarvon soar up from the sea, from the woods, into the sky. And all between them the Menai

Bridge bows shore to shore and sweeps its curve of grace to unite not only the road of the mainland with that of the island, but the beauty too.

I watched it grow before me like a dream, and I stopped to look back at it where the road turns inland. And at this spot there leaps that other bridge, the Britannia Tubular. Might we not say of the work of Telford that it is the spiritual figure in a reborn Ionic inspiration, and that of Robert Stephenson that it is Hephæstus in the Doric spirit, the one supreme in loveliness, the other in grim majesty? They are fit mates these two bridges, the one for the horse, the other for the steam-engine.

We went swinging away now over mile after mile of road, and at set of sun crossed the sea-marshes of Malltraeth. Then away in the dark to Trefdraeth. I had never been here before, and I wanted a light to look at my compass by. The windows of the village school blazed, and the noise of feasting came out of them. In the porch a lot of boys were huddled, and inside some one was haranguing in Welsh. I sent a lad for the schoolmaster, who presently appeared. I asked him if I might stand in his porch a moment or two to examine my map, and he was very kind to me and told me all he knew of the way. He even believed I was going to the place I said I was. I told him I wanted a house-boy who had plenty of spirit but no fads. And I told him I had been all round the island looking for one.

"I've got the boy you want," cried he, and he had.

"What is all this carousing?" I asked

"Dear me, didn't you know it was St David's Day?"

"No," said I.

"Well, come in then and give us a speech whatever."

But I thanked him and declined. I afterwards heard that all this while a dignitary of the Church had been speaking. And his theme was, "Why are we all so narrow-minded and bigoted? Why all this Wales for the Welsh and England for the English?" On which the good schoolmaster had come in and cried, "Here is an English gentleman come who says he must have a Welsh servant." And this good omen was received as a sign of the times and uproariously applauded.

Beating over the windy sands from Llangadwaladr, which takes its name from the last king of all the Britons, I crossed the river Ffraw into that ancient seat of Prince Llewellyn, the last king of the Welsh, Aberffraw. And from thence devouring two miles of road I came out on to the wild headland of Trecastell, where under the wan light of the slim young moon I could see the old cromlechs, called in the Welsh a Giantess's Apronful. Away again over the glimmering sands by the edge of the roaring waves we went, and Pharaoh found out the country he knows, where dwell his legion friends.

It was ten minutes after eleven when I opened

the back-door of the house from whence I had started.

“Well,” said She whom I love. “Have you got your house-boy?”

“Yes,” said I. “I have.”

Alas! I had reckoned without my host—the Anglesey Mother. Nine miles proved too far a cry for her. So in the end I was served by a little blue-eyed rascal hailing from no other place of romance, tradition, and historic lustre than the township of Bootle.

A FRANCO-BELGIAN WALK



ARTOIS, 1917.

Nor the Lily nor the Rose,
But the simple Charlock, grows
Where the Mothers' prayers were sped,
Where the tooth of War was red.

Dawn at Hell's full pitch of riot !
After, when the shock was done,
Human beings lying quiet,
Wondrous quiet, in the sun.

Then the battlefield was cleared.
Rain and squalor, mud and rust !
Twenty miles of country seared,
Levelled, ravaged, overthrust !
|

" Show me the place," a Stranger said to-day,
" Where the fiercest fighting was,
And where the Germans turned at bay."
" On all that waste, now flowers, yon belt
(The kindest kiss where Nature healed)
Of sunny Charlock. There was felt
The brunt of Death on Arras Field."



A FRANCO-BELGIAN WALK.

An account of an approach on foot to Amiens Cathedral
in March 1911.

WHEN my friend and I presented our tickets to the official at Rochefort Station, he asked us whither we were bound. Dieppe I told him was our destination.

"Where are the bicycles?" said he.

"One does not require bicycles when one has feet," said I. He laughed.

"One must have boots to put one's feet into," said he. This remark was to me, the reason being as follows. I had left England in a pair of boots which, although they had been built expressly for me to walk in from Rochefort to Dieppe, fitted me so ill that I first found them pinch as I came over the gangway at Antwerp. From this they grew worse and worse till, the evening before, as the train left us at Namur Station, I declared to my companion that I could stand it no longer. Yet what was to be done? I could not afford more boots. There was only one thing to be done. I must purchase a pair of rubber sand-shoes, send the offenders back, and telegraph my gyp at Cambridge to send an ancient pair of veterans to waylay me on my walk. It was

to these sand-shoes, therefore, that the station official referred when he said, "One must have boots to put one's feet into."

My companion was a man I knew very little of. He had no particular tastes for anything, so far as I could make out. Occasional bursts of enthusiasm characterised him. It was in one of these fits that he begged me to let him accompany me on my walk. He was a man of voluminous speech and an endless chain of anecdotes which one got to recognise link by link as those members appeared and reappeared in the mechanical process of conversation. We had only one thing in common, the fact that we both belonged to the same college of the same university. There were certain dons and certain men of which I approved and of which he disapproved. And on this bed-rock of our mutual bond of friendship we invariably foundered as soon as any prospect of amity discovered itself.

We set off from Rochefort in brave spirits, and followed the big road that led zigzag about the spurs of a thickly-wooded hill which stood up on our left, while the river Lesse swept past us on our right. There was a light railway by the wayside going down to Han. I am not a person who attaches any importance to a meal. Jay, however, insisted that we should feed before proceeding. So we went into an unpretentious café and ate what was put before us.

"We wish to see the grottoes of Han," said I to the landlady.

“Ah,” said she, “I am afraid they will be too full of water, we have had so much rain, but I will try and persuade the guide.”

Having prevailed upon this official, he appeared—a stout little Belgian in a peaked cap.

Going through two or three meadows, we came to the face of a cliff. Here was a great cave, out of whose mouth there ran in a smooth unhastening stream a river of pure water. The day had been overcast till now, but the clouds were blowing away. And this river, that had flowed in complete silence and darkness for over a mile through the secret places of the hill, was not sullen but full of light and of life as it issued forth. Our guide unmoored a boat, prepared two paraffin torches, and made a low whistle, on which there appeared a much more unofficial-looking person that might indeed have been a cave-dweller. Then, taking the oars, he pulled the boat into the stream and started for the grotto. I felt a great thrill of joy go through me at the thought of rowing into the middle of a hill. As we entered the cavern the oars echoed as they kicked at the rowlocks and plunged in the water. And the drippings of their blades echoed too. The profound shadow of the hill fell upon us, but in the depth below light merged slower into darkness.

In feeble and rarefied French I tried to point out to the guide the great serenity of the place. But he in turn staggered me with a list of English celebrities and information concerning the tips they had given him at the end. We soon put in

at a landing and left the boat. The place was full of strange echoes, and a low thunder where some cataract spent its volume in solitude and darkness came to our ears. Now up staircases and steep ramps we went, through natural galleries and passages in the rock, under stalactite canopy and through stalagmite triforium, traversing halls whose immensity the eye could not gauge, with sometimes a gleam in the distance where our torches caught a crystalline vein, and sometimes a great splash of red where the light of our flambeaux tossed on that subterranean river that was never far from us. If the guides had not existed it would doubtless have been a wonderful thing to be in these grottoes. Even Jay was somewhat impressed.

The daylight seemed singularly beautiful when we came out into it again, and a little bird singing on a bough thick with opening buds was merely the same idea transmuted into music. The little man in the official cap now solemnly asked me for his tip, on which the cave-dweller, to the great distress of my nervous system, fired a cannon and then came and approached me in the same manner.

Leaving Han, Jay and I had the first of a long series of disputes. It was about the road. Whereas I always preferred to go lane-wise and across country, Jay preferred sticking to the grand routes. I was the holder of the maps and the undisputed guide of the party, and I pointed out to my companion how much time we should save by going

across this hill instead of round it. Now Jay had brought with him upon our expedition a toy which he was pleased to regard as a scientific instrument. It was a compass, and the biggest fool of a compass imaginable. It would dither and ramble about for an immense time before declaring its polar judgment, and then it would usually alter its mind again. On this occasion Jay produced his compass for the first time. He took it out of the wash-leather bag where it lived and held it out in his hand. It dipped and shuddered a great deal, and finally pointed at me.

“Come, Jay,” said I, “the thing is pointing at me. It is obviously my way that we are to go !”

So up the hill we went by the little track that led through gorse and heather and scrubby dwarf trees. After about a mile and a half we began to descend, and came by another mile into a most exquisite little village called Belvaux. I remember it as a place of rivers and water-wheels and bridges, a place of old things and old people, where one might live perpetually at peace. Several meadows were under water here, and one which had a hump in the middle of it was become an island—a treasure island ripe with golden daffodils—daffodils growing thick up to the top of the mound and standing up to their nodding chins in the flood. One water-wheel was spinning much more rapidly than its creaking gear seemed to like, for the air was full of a most melancholy concert

of shock and abrasion. I asked a boy if there were any trout in these rivers. He said that there were, and told me that he had had one only that morning. He said that if I were to go with him he would show me where I could have plenty of trout. I was sorry to go away from Belvaux, but the air was very invigorating and I was full of the spirit of the walk. The views on the hill-tops of the country all round were beautiful; and the valleys were lovely too. Therefore, as almost every place we were on was either a hill-top or a valley, it seemed such a walk as I had never even hoped for. So we came to Tellin.

Beyond Tellin I again inveigled Jay into a byway. His anecdotes were getting fewer by now, and his speech was beginning to fail. By the time we joined the grand route again his fountain of eloquence had ceased utterly, and he strode on in front of me consumed in wrath. Just about then we were coming up a long sweep of road, bounded on the right and partly overhung by little fir-trees. To the left it was all open country, going down to a long valley. There was a haystack and a little grey pond of water just in front of us. They looked nothing, for the faint afternoon sun was shining in our faces. But as soon as we had passed them I turned round. Lo! now the pool was bright blue and the stack a rich harvest yellow. And the whole landscape of the Ardennes, right into the misty distance, lived doubly by virtue of the little pool and the little stack.

A little farther on Jay, who was still walking ahead, declared it was tea-time. As there was no house in sight, I suggested that he should use his compass to discover the whereabouts of a tea-pot.

“In this rotundity of space——” I began, whereon he recited to me an anecdote that told of a retired naval officer in which the word *rotundity* occurred several times. So in bliss the anecdotes brought us on another mile, and we came to a small café at a four cross-roads. On asking refreshment, we were invited into the parlour-kitchen of the little abode. The man was a forester, and at the time was busy preparing bird-snares out of horse-hairs. His wife was a dear old woman, and there were several children with timid faces and soft eyes. One little girl went and buried her head in Jay’s lap, and he, no whit abashed, addressed her in a boisterous mixture of French and English. At last he put some questions to her, chiefly in her mother-tongue, but which wound up with a sonorous *madame*. Without moving her body, she put her head right back and looked up at him.

“Je ne suis pas mariée, monsieur !” said she.

When we started forth again, I was beginning to feel the force of the stationman’s remark at Rochefort : “One must have boots to put one’s feet into.” Sand-shoes are very nice for a mile or two, but after that foot-soreness sets in and increases painfully fast.

“Those boots have only just time to arrive

in Bouillon before we do," said I to Jay. "It will be great wonder if they do so."

It was now almost dark, and rain was falling. We had each a mackintosh cape, but save for a pair of puttees our lower portions were defenceless. Some worthy friend of mine at Cambridge had said, "Do not take an extra pair of bags in your rucksack; every ounce tells in a walk." Let me grasp the opportunity of warning the public that this is a fallacy. The showers turned into a steady torrent, and I have no recollection of how we got to Maizain, except that we got there. They made no difficulty, however, about putting us up, and we feasted on bacon and eggs before we retired.

Next morning Jay was bursting and bubbling with good-humour. Indeed his spirits were so breezy that I was altogether carried away with them. The morning was fresh and sweet after the rain, and had in it that indescribable chill fragrance that is the lure of travellers. Moreover, our bill for supper, bed, and breakfast only amounted to the equivalent of two shillings a head each. So altogether when we left Maizain we were so merry we could hardly walk straight. The anecdote machine was at work again, wherefore we disregarded such stuff as rain when it came upon us; but by-and-by the rain turned into hail, which stung so sharp that it rather blighted our discourse.

"We should have brought another pair of bags

after all," said I, "or something in the line of high leggings."

"Couldn't we make some?" said Jay.

"Why not?" said I.

"We could get some yards of mackintoshing and make to ourselves aprons," said Jay with great enthusiasm.

"I don't see where you'd get the stuff you call mackintoshing from in this part of the country," said I.

"Well, I suppose you wouldn't," said Jay, easily relinquishing his brilliant project. But I claved to it.

"American cloth is the stuff," said I.

"Is it?" said Jay.

Every now and then the storm held off, and we had most exquisite little views revealed for an instant under the chasing clouds. The country here is like Sheringham in Norfolk. In about five or six miles we came to a place called Paliseul, a little clump of houses situated on a cross-road, or rather on a sort of star centre, from which roads radiated out at at least seven points. I wondered immediately if in this place of limited possibilities there could lurk such a thing as American cloth. We went into a shop of general merchandise, and got to work at trying to explain what it was I wanted. Jay was convinced that American cloth was goods of a rubber description, and spasmodically crowed out "Catch oo! catch oo!" It transpired eventually, however, that what we wanted was called in French

toile cirée, and that the old lady at the other shop was said to possess some.

"How much *toile cirée*," said that old lady, "do you want?"

"Madame," said I, "we want sufficient to make two pairs of trousers out of."

She looked at us over the tops of her spectacles, at our upper portions you will observe, and then said that three yards would be sufficient to construct two pairs of trousers out of. Thereto we purchased two needles and a reel of cotton. Then we went back to the first shop, where we bought some biscuits, and borrowed a pair of scissors. The weather had now thrown over hail and taken to snow. And it was snowing in good earnest, too. So surrounding ourselves in the middle of the shop-floor with biscuits and the things we had recently come by, we commenced our sartorial experiment. The garments, when completed, consisted of a pair of tubular leggings, extending from the ankle to the thigh, where they terminated in a system of tapes for purposes of security. Then in the fulness of my heart I treated a little lad to a hap'orth of sweets, on which he went and offered one to Jay, who, being absorbed in his labours, took the whole lot as a gift and pocketed them. As I was not looking we did not discover this mishap till too late.

It was with feelings of triumph that we sallied forth in our new weather-proof creations. We judged by the ringing laughter of the inhabitants of Paliseul that they too were immensely pleased.

Our knees did not bend quite so freely as they had been wont, otherwise our efforts had been successful. Some coldness, however, occurred between us on my insisting on a byway route. But the cessation of hostilities on the part of the weather cheered our spirits. After we had gone about six miles we came to a little place for all the world like an old Kentish village. Ancient barns and spaly-propped byres abutted on the roadside, and middens were open to public scrutiny. There seemed to be no café here, but in spite of that Jay declared it was lunch-time. We went into a farmhouse. There was an old woman knitting by the fire. I asked her if we could have some food. She asked me what I should like, and I said chocolate and an omelette. She said we should have it. Fancy expecting such things in an English farmhouse !

She made what she called an *omelette jambon* in one saucepan and served the chocolate in another, and we fed at one end of the great farm table. Whilst we partook several workmen came in and had a meal at the other end. They each bowed to us before they sat down, and said some commonplace, to which we replied to the best of our ability. The old woman went on knitting all the while, and we had a very delightful meal.

Then we continued our march on Bouillon. A fit of gloom was enveloping Jay, and he strode on in front deigning no speech. I also was coming to the limits of endurance on account of my sand-shoes, that were now rapidly going to pieces, so

I stalked darkly in the rear ; and thus we traversed many miles, till we came into the broad and many-elbowed way that descends into the valley of the Meuse at Bouillon. Just then a little train passed us and went on into the town.

"I wonder if my boots are in that train," said I to Jay. But he maintained a reproachful silence. I swore in my heart that I would punish him for his indifference. My delight was therefore unbounded when I found that my boots had actually been in that little train, and that I could conclusively prove the fact. I endeavoured to do this—it was before I learned that conclusive proofs impress nobody ; but Jay, whose soul was somewhat relaxed by the products of the restaurant and the good offices of the waitress, merely told me an alarming anecdote about an ex-naval chaplain who had missed a train. These anecdotes were beginning to set my teeth on edge, and I was preparing to be definitely disagreeable, when a little man in a billycock hat came and stood in the door, twirling his mustachios, which were of the sort worn by the wild boar of Ardennes. In his left hand he carried a gun and a brace of woodcock.

"Surely, sir," said I, "you do not shoot woodcock as late as the twentieth of March ?"

"Why not ?" said he with great assumption of distance, "it is all sport." Other patrons of the café addressed remarks to him which he only answered in monosyllables, and having gazed round on us all once or twice, never ceasing to

twiddle his mustachios, he departed. I concluded his visit had been merely to exhibit the result of his prowess.

"Ah! he is a very great sportsman," said a feeble little man with a wizened face. And another who was seated next to him, figured like Humpty-Dumpty except for a black beard, said the same thing. There were two other men at a neighbouring table, but I noticed that the individual who had most remarks addressed to him was the feeble little man with the wizened face, who, however, seemed to be in a sort of dose most of the time.

"About how far is it to Sedan?" said I.

"You are going to Sedan?" said the man with the black beard.

"Why are you going to Sedan?" said another.

"To see it," said I.

"Êtes vous Allemands?" The words rang out like a terrific challenge, and there fell a crash of two fists descending on one of the marble tables and a tumbler smashing on the floor. The little man with the wizened face was standing up shaking with emotion. His eyes were blazing at us, and he was flushed save for a great jagged scar that seemed to shine and writhe on his neck.

"We are English," said I.

"Ah!" said he, sinking back again, "the English are the friends of France."

"Sedan," mused Jay; "what about Sedan?"

"What does your comrade say?" asked the man with the black beard.

"He says he does not remember about Sedan," said I.

The little man leaped to his feet again. "The world may have forgotten about Sedan," said he, "but, by God! France will never forget. You shall see some day that France has not forgotten about Sedan. You mark this?"—pointing to his scar—"that was Sedan, and there is one like it on the heart of France herself." He then sank back, apparently exhausted.

The full and lordly note of Bouillon is struck by the great chateau that forces its strong lines upon the eye from the midst of the greenery of the Meuse valley. The little town is on the east bank, then comes the great river, present with us for just the period of one reach, and on the far side, out from where the pine-trees carry their sweeping branches rib on rib to the sky, stands the fortress, russet in colour, straight of wall, and robust of bastion. A power of war in the forgotten ages, it is destitute now of all possibilities save one, that of casting its shadow—the shadow of the medieval lesson—on the civilised world of the twentieth century.

When we had crossed the river and passed below the chateau daylight began to fail. There was no wind, and we looked back from the hill-top on a picture of absolute peace, a Bouillon of blue haze and smoke and sunset. We were now within half a mile or so of the French frontier, and as, though I had visited many countries, ranging from the Arctic circle to the Equator,

I had never set foot in France, I was all excitement at the immediate prospect of arriving there by the simple process of walking. Jay, however, was not thrilled. Those sand-shoes that I had worn absolutely to pieces in two days had been left to their fate in a Bouillon gutter, and my good old boots had carried me gallantly on considerably in advance of Jay. A little clearing in the woods, a stone rather like an old-fashioned milestone, another step, and I was in France. I stooped down and kissed the earth, for I have always venerated the French nation. Jay plodded past me and rejected further intercourse.

Downhill we went through the great forest in the twilight. Still downhill towards the plains of France and the end of the Ardennes. After about three miles we came into a little village where two men with fixed bayonets rushed out on us, crying out "Halt ! Halt !" and dropping their h's as they did it. Having been captured, we were taken into the guard-room, and the insides of our rucksacks emptied, while Jay read in a loud voice the contents of a French conversation manual, as if he were reciting the burial service. After each sentence he astonished us by his tremendous bursts of laughter. From here we proceeded in the direction of Sedan, and enjoyed an amount of polite conversation such as we had not indulged in since we left Brussels. At Givonne we discovered that we were spent, and decided to put up for the night there. We were surprised to be rejected from every inn in

the place with a polite but firm "Il n'y a pas de place, messieurs." We had yet to learn that in this region of France it is the rule of the ordinary *auberge* not to take in visitors after half-past nine o'clock at night. Anyhow, at the sign of the Golden Cannon we feasted off an unknown dish, washed down by good red wine, cheek by jowl with two commercial travellers. I believe commercial travellers are the same all the world over; always good-humoured, sound-sensed, generous-hearted fellows. The first great lesson every traveller seems naturally to acquire is tolerance. Then he realises that every man is the guest of the world, and so every man is expected to do his share in the world's entertainment.

These two commercials that we now sat alongside of were most agreeable and interesting to talk to. They said that Sedan was not more than six kilometres. The night was clear and the stars were bright when we sallied forth again. At last, having somewhat wearily dusted two miles off the map, we picked up the first gas-lamp of Sedan, and then we passed through that weird area, the purlieus of a town by night. There was a gas-works where by the fiery mouths of retort chambers shadowy human figures toiled at the creation of a midnight oil, occasionally eclipsed by a leaky and thereto squeaky locomotive busy with the mobilisation of coal-trucks. In another place hard by, a building where spick-and-span dynamos hummed at their task of generation, where boiler pumps banged and engines throbbed, and con-

densers gulped and coughed, one or two arc-lamps glared on high, discovering to us patches of poor scarified country giving place to the town in the worst possible aspect of the two elements—blasted vegetation merging into squalid habitation. And yet by night, as our footsteps rang on the paving-stones, as one by one the gas-lamps passed us going into Sedan, how romantic and wonderful it all seemed !

Presently we got into conversation with a man who was going in the same direction as ourselves, and I asked him about the hotels at Sedan. He gave me some information, and then asked what nationality we were. I told him “English.”

“Ah,” said he, after the fashion of the little man at Bouillon, “the English are the friends of France.”

“Are not the Germans ?” said I.

“Ah !” he exclaimed, stopping and holding both his hands to his heart, “here is where they struck us—terrible. You will see at Bazailles tomorrow where it was—terrible !”

Jay, who was impressed by this personal expression of patriotism, offered him a cigarette to console his feelings, which he accepted with alacrity.

The next day had by no means an inspiring dawn. Into Sedan, down the valley of the Meuse, a thin mizzling rain was coming, giving to the streets and all the traffic that moved therein the most depressing appearance. Under those cir-

cumstances Jay and I regarded each other over the breakfast-table with distrust. We made clammy remarks to each other about the distress such weather would bring to the poor, or the joy it would bring to the agriculturist. We did not allude to our own predicament and the imminent opportunity for those distinguished garments we had made the day before. I opened the subject first of all.

"I don't think we need put on those American-cloth bags, do you?" said I.

"Then there's three francs gone," muttered Jay. "I should never have thought of making such things."

"You are right," I agreed solemnly, seizing his sentence by its ambiguity; "you never should have done so."

After this an impenetrable gloom settled down on the two of us. That grave student of human nature, the waiter, discerning our plight, came and offered us pictorial post-cards for sale, which we bought without hesitation. Half an hour later observe us in the rainy streets of Sedan clothed in indignation and American cloth. Jay was on ahead. The topmost stitches of his cylindrical protectors had given way, and now by two elegant corners displayed their white lining flapping doggedly at every step he took. I shouted this news to him, and he, quite without authority, shouted back that mine were doing exactly the same. As we were crossing the bridge over the Meuse Jay dropped a tooth-brush out of his ruck-

sack. Therefore, to heap coals of fire on his head, I picked it up. On this the fastening of my own patent trunk hose burst asunder, and I beheld them at my feet telescoped in the mire. I called on Jay to stop. He said we had dallied long enough. Therefore in a fit of wrath I hurled his tooth-brush after him. It fell into the Meuse, and matters had to be explained to Jay. Our relations had almost reached the breaking-point, added to which the drizzle was growing into full-blown rain. We loathed the sight of each other. The American cloth worn by Jay was an abomination unto me, and I suppose the sentiment was reciprocated. We kept at a great distance from each other, and what little intercourse took place between us was perfectly brutal.

At a street corner I found a cavalry officer chatting with a civilian. I stopped and begged him to point out to me the direction of Bazailles, where the French had suffered their great defeat at the hands of the Germans in 1870. He did so, and told me in a few words the ghastly details of the whole affair. Then he spoke of that monstrous indemnity calculated to cripple France for ever. All this one could have read in a history-book. But to hear this man speak was another matter. Like the other two men, he spoke as if the disaster had been an affair of yesterday, not in the cold voice of the historian who has noticed the congealed facts of an epoch round its date, but with a voice hot with indignation, in which one knew that the lapse of time had not

starved, but ripened, the hate of France for her oppressor.

When I took to the march again, Jay had utterly dwindled out of sight. I found him, however, after a mile, sitting under a hedge in sheer prostration of spirit. He got up again without a word, and we tramped on in silence. I felt that something desperate must be done.

"Jay," said I, "you look a bit fagged; why don't you go by train for to-day?"

"Humph!" said he gloomily. Just then an engine whistle blew quite close at hand. Jay looked up as if a new thing had been revealed to him. "I could meet you to-night," said he quite affably. We hastily bent our steps in the direction of the railway-station. Jay had quite recovered his spirits. He rushed up to the booking-office, and thrust as much of him as space allowed in through the ticket-window, to the great confusion of the clerk, who quickly asked him where he wanted to go.

"I want to go *this* way," said Jay, extricating himself and gesticulating and pointing to the west.

"À Paris?" suggested the clerk.

"Nong! nong!" shouted Jay. "Only—what the devil is the French for *only*, Vale? Only a pity distongce, a very pity distongce!" Then he spun a franc on the booking-counter, and the booking-clerk, being a man of some sense, issued a ticket for nine pennorths of railway journey to the west, and handed Jay back a penny. At

that instant a train going the way we wanted it to, rattled into the station.

"Where shall we meet?" said Jay airily, as he rushed through the glass door on to the platform.

"Est-ce que vous avez un billet?" said the official at the door to me.

Whilst I hesitated to explain that I was merely going to see a friend off, he shut-to and locked the glass door in my face. I saw Jay bound into the last carriage with the glee of a schoolboy. I shouted out something, but nothing save light could pass that barrier. Jay and I were irrevocably separated. The door official was blowing on a meagre little trumpet for the train to start. I seized a map out of my rucksack, two sheets ahead of where we were, and saw on our line of march Hirson. The train was off. I rushed outside the station, and, clearing a low railing, dashed into the midst of a doubtless valuable shrubbery. Going, however, round the buildings, I shouted out—

"Hirson! leave your address there at the post-office for me."

"How spell?" cried out Jay airily.

"HIRSON!" And then I was not at all sure whether he had heard.

I now returned out of the shrubbery in cold blood to face the task of walking in the rain to Hirson (wherever that might be). Laying my maps along a bench in the booking-office, I measured off the distance by means of a discarded

hairpin made to perform the function of dividers, and found that it was forty miles.

When I started I felt that Jay would have been in his element, for I had no alternative but to keep to the grand route the whole way. The country was perfectly flat, and the road was perfectly dull, with enormous telegraph posts and kilometre marks and distance boards. It was a great and sudden change from lovely little Belgium. To express myself adequately I must use a Cheshire dialect verb. I *trapesed* along ten miles into Mézières with only one event befalling me—*i.e.*, the final breakdown of my American-cloth rig. It happened by the dismal process of dissolution, first a tape giving out, then a stitch, then the shiny surface began to wear away through friction, so that the white backing underneath became the source of little rivulets which descended to the earth on the inside of my leggings. On top of this a “searching” wind began to blow in my face, making the bottom parts of my mackintosh cape of no avail, so that the rain now drove boldly into the top of my leggings.

It was about two o'clock when I passed through Mézières, which had all the appearance of a busy manufacturing centre. The wind was now blowing very strongly, and the rain was taking off. Presently it cleared altogether and revealed the surrounding country, which had very few commendable features. I continued at a good smart pace and reached Cluny at something after five o'clock. Here I had a belated lunch, and started

off again. My clothes were dry by now, and I was walking in great comfort, with that strange kind of enjoyment, the sober thrill of walking at a good swing, which is the inevitable third day's reward of the persevering pedestrian. The road swung past me easily, and my soul was dwelling on the simplicity of real human pleasures, when it came on to rain again. Darkness was at hand, and the great stolid poplar-trees which lined the grand route made that phase complete.

I had given up the idea of getting to Hirson that night, and destined Maubert Fontaine as my resting-place. On and on I walked in the glimmerless way, directing my steps as nearly as possible by the crown of the road. The rain was coming down in large weighty drops, and I was again sodden with it. A little gleam wavered ahead on my right. It came from a cottage window where the blinds were not drawn. As I passed it, I observed a peasant couple, both of an extraordinary size, creeping to rest in an enormous bed apparently built into the wall. There is something uncanny in seeing people's faces when they cannot see you, but more particularly when they are suddenly revealed by candle-light in the midst of desolation. I gave a little laugh as I passed. On this I heard a whisper in the darkness just ahead of me, and the next instant I felt myself seized by the shoulder, while a bright weapon gleamed by the light in the cottage, which almost at the same moment became extinct. Also I was conscious of another pair of hands feeling

round the back of my neck for my other shoulder. Either sheer fright or some other power of surprise kept me silent, for I never uttered a sound. The creatures that had hold of me thrust me a bit back, and I heard the fist of one of them knocking on the door of the cottage, and a gruff voice, which, however, brought cheerful news, cried out, "Les gendarmes !" Those peaceful occupants that I had so recently observed suffered from no such vocal paralysis as I had done, for smothered cries and screams were heard within, and I gathered from the sound that they had their origin from under a mountain of bed-clothes.

More knocking and more "Les gendarmes." Presently the candle was restored to life, and a bolt being drawn, the door was opened ajar, on which the candle expired again. The gendarmes, however, disregarding the darkness, pushed the door open, and when we were all inside, shut it to again. Then the light was restored, and we all beheld each other. The two men, with great show of bravery, kept me in hand, whilst the woman shrank back as if I had been a mad dog ready to bite her, pouring out at the same time an incredible number of questions.

Just about now half of Europe was living on a Paris sensation known as the Motor Bandits. Apparently I was suspected of being a Motor Bandit. The first official question put to me was, "Where had I come from ?" I said Rochefort.

"How ?"

“ On foot.”

This they dismissed as quite improbable.

The next—“ Where was I going to ? ”

“ Dieppe.”

“ How ? ”

“ On foot.”

This idea was also pooh-poohed.

They took off my rucksack, and emptied it. The first thing they found was my sketch-book. That excited them; they kept on crying out, “ Ah, so-and-so ! ” They were engaged on the study of my first sketch. It was an outline of a stalactite in the Grotto d’Han—merely an outline, as I had done it hastily by the torchlight. They seemed to consider this the plan of some military work. Next to my sketch-book they found my maps, which were French Ordnance, answering to our inch to the mile survey. A great many “ Ahs ! ” were spent over them. The American-cloth outfit seemed to puzzle them considerably. They asked me my name, and asked me how I could prove I was such a person. I produced a letter addressed to me. They opened it. It was from a friend of mine at the College of St John the Divine at Cambridge, and began, “ Dear old Fool.” They pointed out that the name inside did not agree with that on the envelope. I explained that if I had occasion to write to them I should put “ Messieurs les Gendarmes ” on the envelope, but inside I should put “ My dear old Idiots.” That was the correct thing in my country. The woman, who had approached me with caution

and given heed to what was being said, now spoke.

"Ask him," said she, "what 'Deare ol ful' means in French."

I told them as literally as I could. Immediately their scowling, swashbuckling aspect changed. Some sort of veil seemed torn aside with respect to my doings in France. They regarded me with a sort of pity, as one by one they packed my things back in my rucksack. The woman gave a jolly laugh, and ran into the next room to tell the upshot of our doings to her spouse, who, I doubt not, was waiting anxiously at the roots of that mountain of bedclothes. Then she reappeared, gaily humming a snatch of something, and placed before us three little glasses containing rum. We all drank and were merry. After this the gendarmes made a general motion of departure, and I stepped out of the lake which my wet clothes had created, and we all went into the night once more, and I was left to take my way towards Maubert Fontaine.

The heavy rain had increased in vehemence. The drops felt prodigious. And the darkness being double-dyed, I soon found myself walking into the trunk of a poplar-tree that swished deluges off its lofty swinging pinnacle. After this, however, I managed to keep the road. When I had gone about a mile my heart stood still at an extraordinary sight. It seemed that a pale flame was running along the ground like an ignited train of gunpowder. Silently and swiftly it cut through

the darkness, passed me on my right hand, and was gone. I then realised that it must be the luminous steam of a train in a deep cutting.

Presently the lights of Maubert Fontaine twinkled through the rain, and my heavy footsteps were encouraged. I inquired the way to the leading *auberge* from an umbrellaed individual whom I passed. He pointed it out, and I went there. On the door being opened by a stout burly man, I espied warmth and comfort and two men feeding off well-savoured dishes. There seemed to be plenty of ease and room to spare. It was therefore with the greatest surprise and disgust that I heard the landlord pronounce that baleful doom, "Il n'y a pas de place, monsieur."

I turned back into the darkness and rain with a congealed heart and leaden feet, and went the round of the cafés in Maubert Fontaine, and they all dismissed me with the same prevarication. I was still ten miles from Hirson, and my soul loathed the thought of going there. I went back to the first place, and when the landlord opened the door I thrust myself bodily in and sat down. "If I leave here to-night," said I, "you must carry me out." The good man actually laughed. Then he went on talking to the other two men.

At last one of them said, "They call us Johnny Crapaud in England." On this mine host turned to me and said in a stentorian voice, "Can you eat frogs?" I told him I loved doing so. He took a great many frizzling remnants out of a frying-pan and set them before me, instructing

me how to eat them. The company seemed surprised with my voracity. They said that only an Englishman would eat so cheerfully whilst a stream of water that a tadpole might easily navigate was flowing from him along the floor. I reminded them that I had walked over thirty miles that day. Whereupon they laughed, and said that only an Englishman would have done that.

The room had that look of comfortable security which old fashion bestows. It was wainscotted. You could see where perhaps a hundred years ago a bit here and there had been broken off the mouldings or a crack had occurred. Such conditions had now become reverent with age and generations of paint.

"I expect this old room has had a history?" said I.

The landlord all the time had been making little witty sallies, chiefly at my expense, till at last, when I had taken off my wet things and affected a suit of pyjamas, he fairly sparkled with humour. But immediately I had made the above remark he became serious. This surprised me, and I began to wonder. Was it a murder——? What was it? I ventured to ask him.

"Here, monsieur," said he, touching almost reverently the table where my place was, "Napoleon Buonaparte sat on the day when the battle of Waterloo was fought."

"Waterloo?" said I. "But in Belgium, monsieur——"

"Ah, so! But here he fled in his carriage with

his staff; here he sat — Napoleon — and there he slept," directing his hand to a part of the ceiling.

The countenances of the other two men who had been so lively now assumed the utmost gravity. We were all silent for a moment. Such was still the power of that tragic note—the man Napoleon after Waterloo.

That night as I lay in the inn bedroom in the darkness, with the rain pattering on the window-pane, I thought still more of that great departed guest of long ago—Napoleon—Napoleon after Waterloo.

The next morning the sun was mocking humanity for being cast down by a little rain. Nothing was left of the wry faces and graces of yesterday but the miry clay. The road towards Hirson was much more interesting. It undulates, and the distant views are not displeasing. When I had gone about eight miles I saw advancing towards me a man wearing a capacious pair of knee-breeches, a kind of military tunic, and an official peaked cap. He had a tall wand in his hand, and a cylindrical pack was on his back. A woman dressed in the feminine equivalent of this costume walked a few paces behind, and another man similarly attired brought up the rear. They were coming at a furious pace. But something in the way that they handled their wands gave them the appearance of flying or fluttering along over the ground as an owl does in the gloaming. The

first man made a bee-line for me and saluted me in the most cordial manner. (I noticed he only had three teeth.) He asked me if I was making the "Tour de France." I told him I was only out for a stroll. Whereat, with more protestations of comradeship, he presented me with a pictorial post-card, on which the three of them were portrayed with their names below. Then, waving me an affectionate farewell, he hurried away. The others passed me at a great pace, waving their hands. I waved mine and cried out "Vive la France!" The second man, not being able to discern my nationality, put his cap on the top of his staff, and, flourishing it in the air, cried out, "Vive tout le monde!"

At Hirson I made most diligent inquiries about Jay from the post-office to the railway station, but could find no clue. With regard to France, I considered my poor companion in terms of the needle in the bundle of hay. Leaving the great highway, with its dead white surface and its stolid poplar-trees, I continued on a country byway, much to my relief. I did not expect to get far, as my right foot was paining me.

It was a very misty sunset when I came into the little village of Wimpy. My foot was so bad I could go no farther, so I turned into the little café of one Monsieur Torlet. It was a singularly nice little place, with none of the usual display of bottles and fluids of different sorts and hues. Madame Torlet was not to be persuaded that I, being an Englishman, could understand French as

it is ordinarily spoken. If ever she required to address a remark to me she would come up close to me, and, putting her face within a few inches of mine, she would shout at the top of her voice and gesticulate with the most unusual extravagance.

Later on some official—I believe he was a postman—called and gossiped with Monsieur Torlet. Finally, he turned his attention to me, and, setting his cap at an imposing angle, asked me who I was. I told him. He asked me to prove my identity. I presented him with the same convincing proofs I had submitted to the gendarmes the night before. He asked me if I had a passport. I told him “No.”

“When you are travelling,” said he, fingering his peaked cap to a nicer adjustment, “it is necessary for you to have beaucoup de papiers. Toujours,” he reiterated, making the most horrible faces and flinging his arms out, “beaucoup de papiers !”

A cold drizzle was falling the next day when I bade farewell to Wimpy and the Torlets. They had kept on insisting on the proximity of a railway station, and I had kept on resisting their protestations, knowing, however, that when I turned my back on it I should not find another line of rail for some miles if my foot got worse. That useful member was by no means in good health, and what with this and the depressing influence of the rain, I suffered from an irritating little malady known as *home-sickness*. I went and sat under

a dripping bramble-bush, and let my soul swoop into the abyss of dejection. The abyss of dejection is not a bad place if you close your wings and let yourself drop into it without resistance. I gave in altogether now. I even allowed that I would go by train to Dieppe. Then I thought of Jay. Fancy having lost him in the middle of France—such a pleasant fellow! I would have given anything to have seen Jay appear at that minute. I would have heard his anecdotes with relish. Anybody speaking one word of the English language in an English way I would have welcomed. I grovelled at the bottom of the abyss, in the slime of self-pity and pathos that, had I been a boy, would have moved me to tears. And then my malady began to abate, and I came from my wet bramble-cover with my feet making Dieppe by yards, and spurning the road to the railway station, I soon got, by a sharp turning to the left, into the little village of Etréaupont. This bore quite a different character to any other I had yet gone through. There was a certain abiding peace that old fashion gives, and a relaxation of the up-to-date and the prim order about its buildings and its people, a place where the kerbstone was of no significance. Having gone down the street I turned sharp to the right, into the road to Guise.

The sky was rapidly uncovering; rain had ceased to be. On my left the ground rose up in green slopes with trees, and now and then broke into little cliffs. There were beautiful big cow-

slips and primroses by the wayside. To my right a river meandered through broad marshy lands, and wooded hills rose up on the farther side. Every now and then a bed of red osiers would startle the landscape into life and beauty. I gathered that I was in the country of the basket-maker. I was not wrong, for I soon passed a man with a bundle of stripped withes over his shoulder, and in another mile I met a man and woman wheeling a barrow laden with baskets. I stopped them and examined their freight. They were all waste-paper baskets of the square office type. The people told me that almost everybody about this region were basket-makers. My spirits were getting merry. "At any rate," said I to myself, "the birds and the flowers do not talk French." I came to a little stream with a clear gravel bed, where I found great quantity of water-cresses, of which I partook. The supreme spirit of happiness possessed me, and I took off my boots and stockings and paddled for a while. In the distance I saw a train. "What fools those people must be," said I, "to be in a train when they could be walking!"

Through pleasant orchards I came to Autrepes, a village quite medieval and comfortably tumble-down. It was scarcely more than three o'clock when into the many winding, many intersecting streets of ancient and lordly Guise I directed my steps. My right foot had gone out of gear again, so I allowed myself the afternoon and night in this very fascinating old place.

Guise has quite peculiar features. To begin with, its plan is like a medieval dining-hall. The great ones sit on an elevated platform, the rest sit below. Here at Guise is a cliff sheer as the curtain wall of a castle. Immediately below is the town; immediately above, the chateau. So haughtily does this fortress dominate the situation that it makes no mean background in one's historical imagination for the great name of Duc de Guise. In old days at sunset the whole town must have been darkened by the shadow of the castle, and the silhouettes of the men on its battlements must have stalked like ghosts of giants over the fields beyond the river. Now, however, this ancient site of chivalry is occupied by the less picturesque soldiery of the present day, so I had no opportunity of examining the ruins, which, however, are very fragmentary.

The river—that same which fed the osier-beds at Etréaupont—dissipates itself into several lesser streams, so that you never know whether you are on the mainland or whether you are on an island. These by-waters, running through stony ways, in and out the old houses, whose mullioned windows and drooping eaves nod and bow themselves in the sleep of the ages, are like nothing I have seen before or since. They pass unnoticed in culverts under the main thoroughfares; but a hundred little stone-flagged bridges, without parapet or railing, span them in other places. It was under one of such, linking two back gardens and sub-navigated by a squadron of ducks, that

I passed out of Guise upon the sixth day of my pilgrimage. It was Sunday, and as it should be on such a day the early morning lights were sober and restrained. Guise, by the way, that we are all brought up to call Geeze, is not so spoken of by the inhabitants thereof, but pronounced Gooeeze.

Climbing the steep brow that passes the north flank of the chateau I came in the twinkling of an eye into open country out of sight of the town and out of sound of its Sabbath morning bells. I compassed a couple of miles without event, and then came down to the river Sambre, whose pastoral waters, mewed into a canal with locks and tow-paths, are made to perform the offices of commerce. The margins of this waterway were reedy and restful to look upon. I therefore, when I had crossed a lock, followed the tow-path for some distance and came into the road again below Haute Ville. At a village farther on I was struck by the quaintness of its little church. I went to draw it. Whilst I was doing this two little boys came up, each with a handful of stones. They watched the growth of my artistic product for a little, then I said to them—

“What have you got those stones in your hands for?”

They would not tell me, but looked at each other, and doubling their bodies up and diving their hands between their legs, as boys do at these times, they went off into explosion after explosion of laughter. Still, as they would not tell me, and as I was determined to see, I started another

sketch. There was nobody else about ; I supposed they were all in the church. The boys watched me finish my second drawing with evident relief. Again I asked them, but getting no answer I started on a third picture. They looked woe-begone but resigned. After chatting briskly for a moment they withdrew a little. Then the younger flung a stone on to the church roof, the other kept an eye on me. They paused a second, then another stone was sent spinning on to the roof ; and yet a third. At the fourth essay, however, there was a whirring noise, and a flock of pigeons rushed out of the dovecot in the old belfry. At that the elder boy got to work with his handful. But the third shy had not left his hand when an old gentleman of a bulbiferous countenance issued from the door, dancing with rage and shaking a stick. The boys dropped their stones, skipped a few turns in the air, and then, both pointing at me, ran away. I did not finish my third sketch.

The wind was freshening out of the west, and as I came down one long slope I found it so violent that I could hardly stand against it. The country here is like the Isle of Thanet—windy and open and free, with great rolling hedgeless domes of cultivation, through whose pale vegetation the powdery chalk outcrops,—such country where a ploughman and his team are seen at their best. I now discerned my old enemies, the poplar-trees, marching in gaunt obliquity towards me, and I knew my fate would shortly be to file between them.

It was so, for in another mile I pounded along the grand route bound for St Quentin. I soon discerned that ancient town crowded darkly before the windy March sky, its lofty basilica rising from its midst with all the dignity assumed by a high-naved church that has no tower or spire or pinnacle. I recalled Motley's vivid account of Egmont's brilliant exploit against the French cavalry, and how, of that wreath of laurels he had won, the verdure withered and the poison survived.

Into my dreams of the past there broke a strange company advancing in column of six along the road towards me. It was composed of upwards of a hundred boys dressed in sky-blue sailor suits, such as our infants wear (the straight open knicker kind), with broad-brimmed sailor hats. They were boys of all ages, from, I suppose, seventeen downwards. In front of them strolled a band whose musical exertions were suspended. They were leading their troop at a pace of somewhere about two miles an hour, and every unit of the company was a straggler. The majority were smoking cigarettes. I inquired of one of the bandsmen what in the name of fortune they were. He looked at me as one who beholds a person knowing nothing.

"They are," said he, "the Gymnasts." Who are the Gymnasts?

Coming into St Quentin, I crossed the river by a noble bridge and wended my way to the post-office, as this was a prearranged point of call for my letters. Amongst others was a post-card with

a French stamp on it. Its pencilling ran as follows—

“If you should happen to be in this place, call at the Hotel de la Paix, where you will find me. Tootle-oo.—JAY.”

As I entered the post-office I noted the clerk's moustache to be of a singularly officious turn, and I was offended in it. Now as I left I thought it very becoming indeed. Such had been the glamour of Jay's post-card. Proceeding to the Hotel de la Paix, I found Jay in his bedroom bursting with exuberant spirits. My own overflowed by electric induction. In disconnected charges he hurled his adventures into my ears, interlarding them with many a well-known anecdote.

Later I attended service in the basilica. Oh, the heavy incensed atmosphere, the inspiring devotion of the worshippers, regardless of the clothes they wore and the voices they sang in, thinking only of their worship; oh, the sudden swellings of the organ and the perpetual rhythm of the Gregorian chant; oh, the effect of all these things with the tradition of the building and the place it was in on the heart of the traveller whose tired feet had beaten down a hundred miles of road! I began then to feel something of what the ancient pilgrims undoubtedly felt. He who would see the miracles of Rome must walk there. He who has slept on the Swiss Vitesse and dined

on the Florentine express can only expect to see sights.

After the conclusion of the office I was standing in the south aisle, thinking such thoughts as the great building inspired, when a little old door opened on my right and under a multifoliated portico of middle Gothic came the choir-boys. In red cassocks they were. Mouse-quiet they passed by me, little princes of history. And after them came the choir-master. I stopped him and talked to him. I was surprised to find that he was enthusiastic not only about the voices of his boys but about their welfare. Would to Jove all choir-masters were as this man was. Such stars in the dark night of life does the walker discern. For who arriving by train would ever have had the boldness to talk to a choir-master?

At about six o'clock Jay and I left St Quentin. We lost half an hour in trying to find the inconspicuous road that led to Vermand. To my horror Jay produced his compass. We thereby lost another half-hour. The sun had set before we were in the right thoroughfare. Vermand was only seven or eight miles. It was moonlight, but not really late by the time we got there. We went to a substantial café and begged a night's accommodation, receiving for our answer the usual thing, "*Il n'y a pas de place, messieurs.*" The only other likely people expressed the same formula. We went to a farmer and begged a straw bed in a stable. He was on the point of acquiescing, when his wife, a lady with a face

remarkably like a cow, advised him not. So we were left out-of-doors, and it was beginning to rain.

"Let us," said I at last, "go to the priest." I had an idea that it was the tradition of the Church to afford shelter to wayfarers. There were no lights in the windows of the parsonage, or such windows as we could see, for it stood back behind a garden whose precincts were walled. The gate was locked, but there was a bell-handle there. At this I pulled. A loud and offensive jangle within told that our presence was announced. Nothing happened, so Jay followed my manoeuvre. Then lights appeared in one window, and presently we heard the cleric approaching.

"Monsieur le curé," I began.

"Monsieur le curé," rolled out Jay. "Ah, great, Vale, great! That's the way to tackle him."

I put my case to him, but this unfortunate ebullition on the part of my companion seemed to have aroused his cautious mind, already pregnant with suspicion concerning us.

"Are you Catholic?" said he.

"I am Protestant," said I.

"His father is a Monsieur le curé!" put in Jay with eagerness—wretched man. The worthy pastor shook his head.

"We are Christians," said I. "At any rate we are men!"

But he shook his head again, and I saw the light of a neighbouring window glint ironically on

the crucifix he bore about him as he closed to and locked the gate.

Imitating my tactics at Maubert Fontaine, we went back to the first place we had tried. Suffice it that we prevailed, and slept in a lumber-room.

“Why do you walk to places instead of going there by train like an ordinary mortal?” is the question I have had so frequently pressed upon me. I am never able to answer them by mouth. I will try and make my pen do so. It is because I picture all places with halos of romance and tradition round them. I do not consider them as isolated integrals in the railway time-tables that you can take a ticket to and detrain at when you see particular names written up on a hoarding. I like to approach a place through the whole sphere of its influence, to feel the power of getting gradually into touch with it as I go along; to notice how, from scarcely even knowing its name, people begin to tell you how far it is, till they tell you they have been there or have relations there, till they tell you that in certain winds they can hear the sound of its bells; and, finally, till you find people that cannot imagine anything in commonplace life without the metaphor of that place and all that is done or has been done there prompting at the background of their speech. Then, my Interlocutors, when I get to that place I know something of what it *means*.

For the above reason I was, the following morning, in a state of excitement that Jay could

in no wise fathom. All I could tell him was that in a quarter of a mile we should be in a road that, without turning to the right hand or to the left, would lead us into Amiens, thirty-six miles away. I thought it must be a Roman road, for it goes across the map as if the cartographer had used a ruler. It is a wonderful thing to walk along an ancient way that goes in a straight line, so that every pace you take tells definitely—where the inhabitants of every house you pass are nearer to the issue of your hopes, and where, in this case, the influence and significance of our destination grows and grows along the road from a casual thought in people's minds to a fever throb of reality.

So let it be a thing excused that I gave a cry of joy when I beheld my turning. It strayed inconsequently off the road we were in as if it might have been any ordinary little bypath. But then, when we came into it, it stretched straight for as far as we could see, and that was a long, long way, for the country had gone as flat as a pancake again. A great crucifix stood up by the wayside. The road, thought I, undoubtedly owes its presence to Rome; to which does this figure owe its presence, Rome or Bethlehem of Judea?

The wind blew clear and cold out of the North, opening up rifts of blue sky and piling up the clouds round the far-rolling horizon. And there was a stir about things, an indefinite gleaming among the elements that told of spring. So on

we went over the long straight road, that people and nations had made who were dead and gone, actually thinking of the springtime.

At the little village of Mons we suddenly realised that, saving for an odd franc, we had no French money left. There was a line of rail here that crossed our way at right angles. And there was a suspicion of joy in Jay's face when he declared he would go by train, procure French coins, and meet me at my destination to-night. A mile back there had been another prospect of strained relations, so there was a suspicion of alacrity in my voice when I acquiesced. It was agreed that Jay should travel north to a large town called Peronne, marked on the map, and then, retiring south again by a devious system, should meet me at a point six hours ahead of the march. As we completed our arrangements, a train arrived in the station going the wrong way. Jay immediately climbed into it.

"Never mind," said he. "I'll find a town this way, no doubt, and pick you up somewhere."

I glanced hastily at the maps and saw a place called Estrées-Déniécourt. It was about two hours' walk, but it seemed simple for him to effect a junction with me from the south at the four cross-roads of that place. As Jay copied down the last letter of this rather extravagant name, the train started.

"What if I have lost him again?" I mused as I pushed on down the Roman road. On such a day as I have tried to describe, when the Daughter

of Spring is stirring in her sleep, it is always evident when you are near a river. Perhaps fishermen are more susceptible than other people to this. Anyhow, long before I came to Brie I divined the thrill of water, and on the other side of that hamlet I came down to the Somme, that great sluggish river that, nevertheless, like our own rivers in the East, has a tradition ancient and illustrious. I doubt not these two have seen a lot together, this road and this river. Firminius, the Roman—for all I know the first missionary in France—came hereabouts, perhaps on this very Roman road. His blood stained the Somme. It is said that the *fleur-de-lis* first flourished on this river, where Firmin's blood was spilt. And hereabouts Clovis reigned when he was a boy of fifteen.

At the point where I was crossing the Somme, its waters were pent between artificial banks, as those of the Sambre had been, and since it was navigable, a leaf in the long iron bridge was made to swing. The thing that struck me at once as remarkable was the enormous margin of sedges and pampas grasses that fringed the right bank. They were, as if on purpose, watered by the overflow from the river. In places large patches of these rushes had been reaped, and a great quantity of this aqueous harvest was stacked on the bank. Nay, even as I looked, a large cart heaped with them came creaking on to the bridge. I asked the driver what people wanted with such a soft, fat, brittle rush as this. He told me that they were used to stuff arm-chairs, sofas, and such-

like furniture. Poor things! thought I, for I cannot imagine a more appalling doom than to be taken from the luscious rooty fragrance of a fenland, and put to end one's days supporting lazy people in a billiard-room, a drawing-room, or a hotel lounge.

At two o'clock I got to Estrées-Déniécourt. I thought that probably Jay would have been before me at the cross-roads, but he was not. There was a café there, so I entered it for purposes of refreshment and observation. An hour elapsed and no Jay! Another hour went by, and after that I began to spread the news abroad that I had lost my companion, and prosecuted diligent inquiries concerning whether he had been seen or not. After that I went melancholy expeditions up and down the road to the station without result. After dark, as late as half-past seven, I still expected my elusive comrade-in-arms. Everybody who came into the café was talking about him. "It was an easy thing," they said, "to lose oneself on the railway. You get by mistake into an express train, and *chut!*"—the little man, who was the organ of the explanation party, shot his hand across the table,—“you are in Italy!”

The idea of Jay arriving in Italy instead of this particular cross-road struck me as so ludicrous that I burst out laughing. The little man, who, by the way, was not absolutely sober, thought I had not grasped his proposition. He therefore got on his feet and made a huge demonstration

of Jay's Franco-Italian express, overturning with regrettable reality every object that impeded the progress of that lightning train. Things upset and spilled on the table, and a coffee glass went to pieces on the floor. Immediately there was a hubbub, landlord and landlady and the friends of the little man all in an uproar. As I felt seriously implicated in the affair, I went over and offered to make good the damage. But no one would pay any attention, except the little man, who touched me confidentially on the shoulder, and began demonstrating express trains on another table. I had to restrain him by force, whereat the whole company descended on me, calling out that I was a stranger, probably a German, and the cause of all the trouble. I have never been in such a pandemonium. Yet though they all surged about me, making the most appalling faces and noises, nobody attempted to lay hands on me. Just at the moment when the place seemed perfectly alive with faces and hands, and I expected by a sudden wave of enthusiasm to be swept bodily into the street, other shouts were heard outside. "Ah! Votre camarade! Votre camarade!" There was an instant's lull in the café, when Jay, effervescing with Cambridge commonplaces, hove jubilant through the door, attended by an enormous crowd. The menacing spirit of my own particular mob switched with the velocity of the proposed express train on to another track. They applauded wildly.

Scarcely realising the absurdity of the thing—

so is the mind of one man swayed by the multitude—I stepped forward and shook hands with Jay, and as though we were the most loving brothers in the world, we sat down to a little table and ordered *café au lait*. The *aubergiste* that a moment before had been a howling maniac now hurried about our business, while approving murmurs of “They are English” were heard on all sides. The little man, whose railway theories had been conclusively exploded, came forward and shook us by the hand, and we treated him to a non-intoxicant.

My lost comrade’s explanation was that he, after changing the money, had bought a map. A motor map it was, of several miles to the inch, with the name of Estrées-Déniécourt splayed out in large letters along the road. And he, being unused to this class of map, had made for the first letter instead of the last, which had landed him six miles nearer Amiens.

Little more is to be told of this day. We struck off across ploughed fields to the lights of a little village called Proyard. The ploughed fields put Jay out of temper, so that he maintained his old attitude of protest by stalking ahead in dark silence. As we walked through the little moonlit street of whitewashed farms and cottages, I heard a most extraordinarily faëry sound. At first I thought it was water dripping into some full-sounding well. But, lo, it occurred everywhere in all places. I did not think it could be of a bird, animal, or reptile. Could it be elfin mu-

sicians performing on some instrument unknown to mankind ? We found lodgings.

The next morning I asked the landlord what this noise was, explaining it to the best of my ability.

“ It is the song of the *caille*, ” said he.

While I was turning in my mind what sort of a being, mortal or immortal, the *caille* might be, he led me into the yard, and behold in a cage a little quail.

At a place called Villers Bretonneux Jay exhibited a sudden alacrity to go by train. So once more he vanished in a cloud of steam out of my ken.

Since we had started from Proyard my main thought had been, “ When shall I see Amiens Cathedral ? ” I thought perhaps four or five miles from the city I might see it standing up in the distance as only a cathedral can stand up. As I passed the eighteen-kilometre stone I said to myself, “ In ten kilometres at most I shall see it. ” The road was still inflexible in its gaunt geometric persistence, though it had grown from a byway into a grand route, which made the force of the proximity of Amiens grow upon me, and made me long more than ever to see it. I was going up a hill through a pretty wood where anemone and aconite ran riot along the ground. At the top of this hill the woods suddenly ceased, and again there was a great expanse of rolling country going down into a plain. Far away, a

blue smirch in the distance, were the clustered houses of a town. Was this Amiens? If so, I was deeply disappointed. A tree stood before me in the foreground of the picture. It looked so pretty I hardly liked to move for fear that I should spoil the composition of the view. At last I moved. Like a magic scale falling from the eye the whole distance altered. For there, where my tree had been, stood the great cathedral. The town was indeed Amiens.

If the rest of our adventures must be told, it shall be done in two sentences. Jay went by train to Boulogne. My foot was done, alack, so I went by train to Dieppe.



HOTEL DU GRAND TURC
MAUBERT-FONTAINE



A JAPANESE WALK

THERE's an infectious courage in the Hills ;
Here the great statuary of Heaven we see,
Soaring suggestion leavening men's wills,
Raising Man up from mediocrity.

The Sea hath motion, wrath and calm divine,
Easier to interpret is the Sea ;
But God in's Mountains writes a loftier line—
Silence, the muse of Death, His mystery.

But there's infectious courage in the Hills,
Who looks will dare (as David made his song)
To mock Convention, ruffling in her frills,
And handle Truth for love of what is strong.

A JAPANESE WALK.

An account of an approach on foot to the Volcano
Asama Yama in August 1912.

AT Shimonita I left the little train which had brought me from Takasaki, and, swinging my rucksack to its place between my shoulders, I made off through the pretty old streets for the North. I was bound for Karuizawa at the foot of the great volcano, Asama Yama. There is a train to Karuizawa. I was only walking because I have a great reverence for a volcano, and I think it is the only fit way to approach one. Besides, is it not a glorious thing to *find* a volcano for yourself out of the midst of a lot of commonplace hills? My route was more direct than that of the railway, and I reckoned that the walk would be about forty miles. But whether there was a track of any sort I did not know. For my map, I had torn out one from Murray's Guide with a scale of about ten miles to the inch.

Moto Juku was the first place that lay in my way, so towards Moto Juku I bent my steps. It was exceedingly hot and sultry, but the country was very beautiful, so what did anything else matter? Quite a definite highway led out of Shimonita up a valley crowded with trees and

flowers. And all the trees and flowers were as full of life as they could stick. Butterflies twinkled in the air, the noisy cicada clucked and trilled from goodness knows where, birds there were in plenty, and frogs blabbed persistently of their whereabouts. Such is the constant presence of vigorous life and beauty in Japan and so quaint and simple is man's art there, that to go on a walk is like passing through some old book of story, some poem printed in the old type and instinct with the old charm. For Man is *not* vile in this place of wonder, he is very ornamental and sorts as well with the scenery as a ship does with the sea. And wherever you go in Japan you shall see pretty children with pretty ways and pretty dresses. Little girls, with kimonos as bright as the rainbow, chase each other like butterflies through the long grasses and flowery thickets of the wayside. And the young boys in blue smocks, but naked from the waist, sturdy and sun-browned, stop in their play and eye the stranger with the utmost solemnity as he passes by.

When I had been going for about five miles I stopped at a house which seemed to be a kind of place of entertainment, for three men were squatting within drinking o-cha. So I went in too, and drank o-cha and devoured pickled plums. While I was thus engaged I became aware that my rucksack had disappeared from where I had put it down beside me. I looked round cautiously and saw the ladies of the house prostrated on the floor, minutely examining the contents, all of

which they had removed. They were not the least disconcerted when they found that I was observing them; they only laughed a little and talked a lot more. They were exceedingly interested in the form and construction of every object, but one particular thing which I could not see appeared to engross them more than the others. They seemed to have a great reverence for the thing, and hid it up in their hands. They spoke in awestruck whispers about it and called the three men who were drinking o-cha to come and examine the wonder. I could not imagine what it was.

At last, however, I caught a glimpse. It was my shaving-brush. Now, luckily, I had remained unshorn for three days, so I determined to show these good people what their little badger god could do in his proper capacity. As it was I did not quite know what they took it for, but I conjecture that they thought it a switch of the hair of some dear departed. Anyhow, I called for O-yu, which is by interpretation "honourable water." Cold water to the Japanese is a commonplace thing, but when it is made hot it becomes honourable. Presently I shaved. A great company assembled—the Japanese have a way of mustering from nowhere that is quite remarkable. They watched the performance with no small solemnity, speaking no word, only blinking with those steady creaseless eyelids which are more impressive than anything the Western poet sings of. I suppose the points of a shaving-brush have never been so critically observed before.

When I had finished they repacked my rucksack for me, arranging it carefully and exactly in the same bad order as I had done in a hurry that morning. So with a profusion of bows on all sides we parted, and I held on my course for Moto Juku. On the way I fell into company with a pleasant old gentleman who walked in the shadow of a large paper umbrella. He stopped when I stopped, and I stopped when he stopped; I smiled at him, and he beamed at me; and so together we came to Moto Juku, where we parted without a spoken word between us but with bowings so deep as nearly to cause our forelocks to touch the ground. There was a shop at this place, a shop that sold all sorts of things, including drinks. Now I was very thirsty, and I spied a bottle that declared itself in Japanese English to be Japanese wine made in the country—the latter word being spelt without an *o*, and reinforced with an *a* and an *e*. I paid a large price for this article. Coming by a tumbler I poured it out. It was a thick viscous fluid, and strongly resembled brown treacle both in colour and in the manner of pouring. It was terribly sweet, but, after a time, I managed to drink it all. Then I lay down on the shop floor, and whether it was from the fatigues and heat of the way or from the potency of the draught I know not, but oblivion came comfortably upon me and I fell fast asleep. When I awoke I saw that a dense crowd had gathered, and was watching me in mute astonishment. Little boys with babies on their backs,

little girls, young men and maidens, old men, and they who stooped for age, even the local cripples, had turned out. The owners of the shop, waiving all claims to business, were seated about me smoking their little pipes and watching me as if I were a performance. Dead silence prevailed except for the baby voice of the cicada that vociferated from the hand of each urchin present. In Japan the cicada begins his day by singing on a tree. A little boy comes along with a bamboo on whose extremity is a smear of bird-lime. Presently the cicada is in the hand of that little boy, where he continues his music with unabated fervour. One can learn a great philosophy from the cicada.

The next point to be gained after leaving Moto Juku was a place called Hatsudoya. The track was still very fair. There is a good deal of industry in these remote places in the silk line. I suppose that is why they are not absolutely cut off. At nearly every little house I passed in Moto Juku women were boiling silk cocoons, and in other places they were winding it and spinning it. But the houses were getting very scarce now, and the pleasant valleys of Shimonita were gradually narrowing into the dark gorges of Miongi San, the mountain of dark forests and silent gods. The big river was still on my left hand. Its course had become more rapid, but there was no joy in its voice. Dark clouds were mustering and rolling on the hill-tops all about, and the air was heavy with a sort of stupor. The little stone

gods by the wayside, and those gates, impressive in their stern simplicity, that in Japan they call Torii,—gates of the sacred symbol marking the entrance to groves that lead to temples hidden far away, added another note of gloom that made me listen more carefully to my own footsteps and keep my eyes about for hobgoblins and old bearded spirits of the mountains. There is something in the approach of a thunderstorm that makes the best of us, when we are in a lonely place, feel and behave like little children.

There is something, too, about this sort of atmosphere that gives to inanimate things the appearance of possessing a soul. And so it was this day that as I passed the image of the little god Jizo time after time I almost had it in my heart to believe in graven images. Jizo has a sweet disposition. He it is who watches over the traveller, succours women in their trouble, and loves little children. By his image you will always find a pile of stones. That is because the wicked hag Shōzuka-no-Baba has robbed little ones in the underworld of their garments and is for ever making them pile up pebbles on the banks of the River of Death. So if you place a stone by the image of Jizo he will labour so much for the children in the dark regions. I was in the act of placing one of these pebbles when it seemed as if something blinked in the air. In a few more seconds came the heavy roll of thunder far away in the mountains. This possessed me with a

feeling of great loneliness, and I started walking again at a great pace.

Presently I crossed the river and came in sight of one or two little houses. Heavy drops of rain were beginning to fall, and the brattling of the thunder was more frequent and closer. Once again I crossed the river. And now the path mounted up through the steep ravine and led along the escarpment of a mighty crag overhung with a profusion of melancholy vegetation. It was getting late in the day, and the approaching storm crowding the sky with clouds made an unearthly twilight. I thought, however, that I could not be far from Hatsudoya. Below me, on the left, the water of the river, now pent in a narrow channel, raced and roared. Its bed, too, was broken with cataracts and waterfalls, whose deep and incessant roar vied with the booming of the thunder.

In the middle of all this awesome state of scenery and atmosphere, and in the most inconsequent way in the world, the pleasant old gentleman with the large paper umbrella suddenly made his appearance coming in the opposite direction. He came on smiling and seemed quite undisturbed either by the approach of the storm or the night. Once again we smiled, and once again we bit the dust before each other, and once again we parted having said nothing. But I was much comforted by the sight of him, for it showed that Hatsudoya could not be far. But I wondered considerably at so aged a person making a journey like this with

so little concern. For if he was returning to where I had met him on the other side of Moto Juku, he could not be home much before midnight, and would then have been some twenty miles or more.

At last a small house hove in sight and then another. "Hatsudoya!" said I to myself with great contentment. But almost at the same instant, with a most appalling flash and crash, the storm burst right overhead and the rain descended. "Lightning," say the Japanese, "is a cat with flaming eyes who leaps to earth." And certainly it seemed to me, as the noise of this great thunder rattled and bounded away among the hills, as if some grimly beast was clawing and scrabbling on the stony peaks and ridges of the mountains.

There were a few people standing about in the open, quite unconcerned by the state of the weather. I made for them and cried out "Kaminari!" which in the English is "Voice of a god!"—*i.e.*, thunder. They readily acquiesced on this point, and nodded their heads gravely—"Hi! Hi!" said they. Then I leaned my head over on one side on to my hand and closing my eyes commenced to snore loudly. They took in the situation splendidly, and led me away down the curious little street to what appeared to be the largest house in the village. Here there was a boy sitting on the edge of the floor swaying from side to side for the entertainment of a baby that was made fast to his back. At the shout of my guides

a woman and two men made their appearance. The situation was explained, and we all fell to prostrating ourselves. When the ceremonies were over they made me very welcome.

Later on that evening my host came into the room where I was and squatted down beside me ; and we two remained like this, motionless and speechless, for somewhere about half an hour, after which he said to me, "Nipon gohen ?" Now I was desperately hungry, but I did not want Nipon gohen ; the name, as well as the stuff, had become an abomination unto me. So I got out a pen and a piece of paper and drew a picture of a hen laying an egg. At this my host instantly withdrew, and presently returned bearing a lacquer tray that contained nineteen eggs and three plates of sliced cucumber. I am not even now able to decide whether he had read something more abstruse out of my illustration than I had intended, or whether it is a Japanese custom to eat cucumber with raw eggs. Anyhow, I did not trouble about it at the time. I cleared off all the cucumber and set about boiling two of the eggs in the little kettle on my charcoal stove. This surprised my friend extremely, and he brought the family in and some neighbours to watch.

The next morning was fine and clear in the way that it is fine and clear only after heavy rain the day before. I got away from my hospitable friends as early as I could, and continued the broken path which I believed would lead me into

Karuizawa. It was all the time uphill, and I was still in that long defile, but the river was less *en évidence*. The path wound in and out along those many-spurred hills, whose steep sides were thickly bushed and wooded. Presently, by a tolerably well-made bridge, I crossed the ravine again.

And now the country began to wear an entirely different appearance. The woods, the forests, and the scrub had disappeared, and with them had gone rock and crag. In their place were quiet pretty terraces, where simple flowers made the most lovely harmonies in colour I have ever seen. The sky was blue, but not such a blue as the campanula and scabious on these tender plains. And here and there little white clouds were blown along the sky. But they were not so white as the lilies that swayed and nodded in the midst of the soft blue flowers. This place is called, I believe, the Ridge of Wami Tongi.

It seemed to me now that I must shortly behold that mighty thing which I had come out for to see, which occupied all my thoughts, and whose high-sounding name I kept repeating to myself as I walked—the volcano Asama. I pictured it in many shapes, in many ways, now as a pyramid like the Peak of Teneriffe, now as a little horned hill like Vesuvius, now as a hill among hills like Hekla. But all with the sable plume of Vulcan predominating. At last, thinking these things, I came to a little bluff. “When I have cleared this,” said I, “I shall see Asama.” So I drooped

my eyes and shaded them with my hand, and when I knew that I had gone by the bluff I suddenly raised my head and dropped my hand—but no Asama, only another bluff a little higher up. I repeated the precaution, but still without success. Little bluffs seemed to abound. The air was so sweet and pure and fresh up here that I began to think about England, and wondered all manner of things about my home. One always walks quickly when one thinks of home in a far country. All at once I looked about me. The whole landscape was changed. It almost seemed as if it had gone, so complete was that change. There was no longer anything in front of me. I looked down upon a vast plain, a desert of swamps and grasses, that stretched away for miles to the foot of a great mountain whose massive summit was rolled in sulphurous clouds. “It is Asama!” I cried.



BY CRANK WITH DOG ROC

I AM a lad that has no lass ;
The world is mine, with none to share it ;
The wind is in the sandhill grass,
Then to my love I will compare it !

I have no lass, and yet I love :
I worship whom I see not, know not.
The sky of April is above,
My love it is ; I reap but sow not !

With cress and mint the stream is set,
With silken catkin bows the tree ;
Sun sparkles where the waters fret—
Would maiden's eye flash more for me ?

In Wynal's copse new shadows play,
Far off I hear the peewits cry ;
The blackthorn burst a-bloom to-day,
Surely my love is passing by !

Oh, hush of dawn on primrose dew ;
Oh, star-peep and throstle song together ;
Where is the lass will peer with you,
My winsome love of Springtime weather ?



BY CRANK WITH DOG ROC.

An account of a journey by cycle from Chinnor in the Chilterns
to Cwm Bychan in Ardudwy in June 1922.

ON a warm evening in the month of June I turned my back on the Chiltern Hills, and set my face towards the mountains of Ardudwy, in the far land of Wales. My conveyance was a well-made bicycle, my company a red Irish setter. We left Chinnor well loaded and well found by nature with a following wind, which speeded us favourably and played merrily in the feathering of Roc's tail. We were soon passing through Thame, with its great broad thoroughfare. So royal is the road through Thame that a fair with swing-boats and merry-go-rounds can be held in the street and still leave two wide highways for the traveller. On the right hand I passed an old Tudor building that was formerly a grammar-school. Here that fine quiet man, Tom Elwood the Quaker, the friend of George Fox and William Penn and pupil of Milton, first learned his Latin under the birchen sceptre. Here also John Hampden, mortally wounded on Chalgrove Field, was brought to die.

Outside the little town we took the road for

the north, and crossed the river Thame, a tranquil stream that falls through pleasant water-meadows into the Thames basin. In its waters abound those curious little monsters, the fresh-water crawfish. At one time the catching of them in snare-nets and the selling of them in the Thame market was quite an industry. The low-lying land crossed, the road led us sharply up to Long Crendon, and sharply down again, and presently the pretty wooded heights of Brill stood up on our right hand.

This road had all the charms of the old English highway before the scarifying era of motordom. Generous margins of grass, great umbrageous hedgerows, dark, overhanging, and shining with may like cresting billows, delighted the eye of the traveller, and smacked richly of coney to the nostril of the Irish setter. At a turn we opened up a remarkable vista, near a quarter of a mile in length, of donkeys and horses, some feeding, some reposing in the road, some rolling with flying hoofs. Having steered precariously through their midst without finding that they had any human supervision, we came suddenly on an encampment of gipsies. They were withdrawn from the road on to the grass margin. Two caravans were pulled up under the hedge, and their occupants formed two groups on the grass. Two kettles boiled, two tea-parties were in progress, and an elderly man sat apart smoking in a Windsor chair, like a chief watching over the harmony of two tribes.

I got off my bicycle and introduced Roc, explaining that he was thirsty. A girl came forward and proffered a bucket with water. She was indeed a queen of the woods, this girl: supple in figure and of a splendid carriage, with abundant dark hair sweeping to a plait over gold earrings, and eyes of a pigment yet unnamed flashing with merriment. As sparks are struck from a ringing anvil in a dark smithy, so she lifted her glance to me as she laughed and caressed the drinking dog.

"A Scout gentleman, no doubt?" said the old man in the Windsor chair. This he had deduced from the football shorts in which I was habited. I said him nay. "A gentleman from the Oxford College?" said the next senior, who presided over the group nearest to the caravans. This also proving beside the mark, the darkest of the gipsy ladies, with a necklace three strings deep in red coral, hazarded, "A sporting gentleman he is, by his dog." I agreed to this definition. I told them that I was going to Wales. "Wales!" said three of them at once, and paused. It seemed to bring pictures to them of nights on cool upland moors, and days trafficking with mountain ponies, and evenings stealing a march on keepers by the great water-floods where the salmon lurked. "Wales!" they said again, and shook their heads.

I asked them if they spoke Romany, on which the second senior reeled off a long vocabulary of Romany nouns with their English equivalents, asking me at the end if I knew that much. Before

I had time to answer, the old man jerked the clay pipe from his mouth with a deprecating gesture.

"You can't speak Romany proper, none of you," said he. The youths and the women raised objections to this. "No, you can't, none of you!" he said. His clean-shaven jaw was square, his mouth firm and menacing. His eyes were like those of the young girl, but in him they glittered. He looked sharply from one to the other. "None of you can't!" said he. "You know just enough words for when there's a copper or a keeper about, but you can't say everything in Romany without no English. And all except *you*"—he pointed to the elder woman—"haven't got the Romany way in talking neither, not the soft deep voice. Oh, it's all gone! They've left the open and took to houses. They've married with foreigners. It's all gone! Don't tell me different!"

Here the girl who had taken pity on Roc now offered his master a cup of tea. And she proffered it with an expression of fair mobile features, as if to give were a poem of womanhood, without words, easy for her to recite.

The talk fell on hedgehogs, their excellence in eating, how they should be hunted, and how prepared for the table. The old man told tales of the hedgehog-hunting dogs he had known, and the elder woman, who was his wife, brought to mind the rich feasts of the past. I asked the Second Senior if he had soldiered during the war. He told me that he had served in nine different units. In spite of this varied experience, the main

thing that impressed him was the wiles of a certain conscript who in civil life was a bath-chair proprietor. The genius of this man was engaged in a struggle, not with the enemy, but with the competent military authority. All the machinery of discipline, including sergeants, sergeant-majors, orderly rooms and courts-martial, could not break the civilian spirit of this inveterate bath-chair man. Even after he had wormed his way out of the service, and they tried to make him labour on the land, he defeated them. "And he was that quiet and innocent," said my informant, "you'd think that one of the old ladies he used to drag round could have knocked him down with a feather!"

While the adventures of the bath-chair man had been spoken and acted, the girl who had befriended Roc and me was so overcome with mirth that she rolled on the ground panting with laughter. One of the youths, thinking this wild conduct unbecoming in the presence of a *gorgio*, rebuked her. Instantly she sat up and embraced her knees, looking as fierce and sullen as an insulted Cleopatra who has no hope of retaliation.

"Have you been to school?" I inquired, venturing to address her.

"Four years," said the elder woman, who was her mother.

"At a board school?" I asked.

"No. With the Catholics," said the woman.

"Are you a Catholic?" said I to the girl.

"No," said the woman, "although she's re-

ligious like me. But the Catholics teaches them quick. They can learn them everything in four years."

"*She's* the scholar!" said the old man, pointing with his pipe at the wife of the Second Senior. "She reads novels. When I was young we couldn't, none of us, read nor write. We had to get our letters written for us and read for us. When I was courting *her*"—his pipe-stem indicated the dark lady with the coral necklace—"I wanted to write her a loving letter. I had to go to a man that could do such-like. And I said to him, 'Can you write a loving letter?' 'Yes, I can,' he said. 'Put what's the most affectionate beginning,' I said. So he began 'Madam.' She wasn't no scholar, and when the letter was made out to her, she was insulted—*insulted!*"

The sky was red with sunset and the moon risen when Roc and I left this pleasant company and rode through the quiet old town of Bicester and on down the straight Roman road to Middleton Stoney. Here we fell among old friends, and feasted by moonlight in an enchanted garden where no breeze stirred, guarded by the silvery sweep of cedars, and overwatched by elms as massive in their shadow as their bulk.

Of Roc's first master more will never be known than that he died fighting for his country. Roc I first beheld a bedraggled, mud-foundered object, looking wistfully at me from a shell-hole, four days after the battle of Arras. It was in the neighbour-



ROC OF ROCLINCOURT.

hood of Roclincourt, where the front line had been before the advance. He looked at me, and weakly cocked his ears. He had the head of an Irish setter, and a singularly beautiful head at that, but what the rest of him might be was impossible to say. It was a rare thing to see a thoroughbred dog in France. But such Roc proved to be. His age was computed at six months. Many adventures did we have together in France. Once he held up a battalion coming out of the line with fixed bayonets, supposing the trench that they walked in to belong to me. Once when rations were low did he procure us a leg of mutton from a neighbouring unit. One time he was stolen and taken miles away on a lorry, but returned in twenty-four hours. And, besides all, he did many clever things, the which if they were told would hardly be credited. Roc has a fine genial nature. He is unprovoking among his race, but a surprising fighter when attacked. He is a great dog, and in his company his master fears no social disparagement.

We left Middleton Stoney along the road that leads to Heyford. The country here is open and rolling, and where the bare earth shows it is a warm terra-cotta colour. Here and there were fields of red lucerne ripe for the mower, and other fields yellow with charlock enlivening the landscape. The road was as rustic as could be wished, and few motors were encountered. At the bottom of a steep dingle we paused by a stream, that Roc might refresh his inner and outer man in the water.

"That's a fine dog, master; I say that's a fine dog!" I looked up to the stone bridge that carried the road across the brook and saw over the parapet a white-whiskered countenance lit by a pair of small shrewd eyes and shaded by a wide-awake hat.

"Yes," I said.

"Reckon he's worth a smart lot," said the other.

"Do you want to buy him?" said I.

"No thought further," said he. "Reckon he's faithful."

I went on to the bridge. There was a house with a strange name marked on my map. It lay about a mile farther on. I asked my aged acquaintance what such a name could signify.

"That's by the old Turnpike House," said he. "Used to be a Public, days gone by."

"Why did they call it by that name?" said I.

"My grandfather's grandfather couldn't tell you that," said he, "but in my recollection they had a whistling pint horn there."

"What is a whistling pint horn?" said I.

"They gave you a pint in a horn," said he. "You drank out of one end all in a breath, and then if you could do that and blow the whistle in the other end all in the *same* breath the pint was a present. But if you couldn't do it all in the one breath you had to pay for a quart."

"And was the beer then better than the beer now?" said I.

"There's no shank in the beer now," said he. "It isn't beer."

“Do you remember the Turnpike Gate?” I asked.

“The Turnpike Gate!” said he with sudden warmth, as if this were a subject on which he had lavished much thought—“the Turnpike Gate! Of course I do. That’s where the Government made the mistake of their lives. They ought never to have took down the Turnpike Gates. Charging a shilling a gate to the motors, look what a smart sum they’d have made! And only them as used the roads would be to pay. Instead of that it’s all done in rates and taxes, and the poor man has to help pave a way for them as shovels dust into his house and on his garden flowers by the bag-load. The Government made the mistake of their lives—I say they made the mistake of their lives over taking down the Turnpike Gates.”

Trundling ourselves out of this pleasant little valley on the bottom gear, we came on to an upland where the red sainfoin flourished abundantly, but now there was no blue sky and sunlight to make it startle the landscape, for low tangled clouds like fresh sheared wool had spread overhead seeming to threaten thunder. Passing the aforetime public-house and site of the Turnpike Gate we came to a fork in the roads marked Gagingwell. Here on the right hand were some ugly brick cottages, and on the left in a wide island of grass the base of an old stone cross. This little ruin looked thoroughly unkempt. An elder-bush sprouted up beside it. But even so it touched the heart and stirred the sentiment as a

noble relic should, and with an added home-thrust spoke of Time's hand that crumbles the material symbol, but has no power over the spiritual ideal to which it was raised.

A boy who was chewing a licorice-stick, or in the time-honoured vernacular "sucking Spanish," I applied to for information as to this old cross whose steps alone remained, but he could tell me nothing.

"Were you born here?" said I.

"Yes," said he.

"And you never heard anything about it?"

"No," said he.

A man came slowly out of the house and pointed to the stones. "That there," said he, "is all it is. It's nothing else but that there."

Very soon the road led us downhill into a little village. My map informed me that it was called Enstone. Maps are absurdly practical things. They must account for every square inch of everywhere but the sea. If it had not been for the map, I should easily have persuaded myself that this place was a temporary vision of mediævalism fallen inadvertently out of the lap of Time across my path, presently to vanish and never more be seen of men. Such a charm was in its old houses, its old people, and its winding ways, that I went warily lest a bicycle should shock folk as an unheard-of innovation. But a practical point was soon established—to wit, the procurability of bread-and-cheese and a glass of ale. Yet the inn was in keeping with the rest, and mine

host in keeping with his inn. In the parlour of this hostelry was a target for darts made of the section of a trunk of a tree and quartered with numbers. Dart-holes by the thousand had given it a spongy look, but on the wall, which was also of wood, the perforations wide of the mark were so manifold that places were eaten out as if the rats had gnawed them, indicating with what good cheer the dart-throwers often went to work.

“What interesting thing is to be seen in this place?” said I.

The landlord thought a minute. “There’s the arch,” said he.

“What arch?” said I.

A member of the landlord’s family dining in an unrevealed apartment answered from obscurity, “It’s got a head on it and a seat on each side.”

“It’s very old,” said the landlord; “they don’t know what it’s for.”

“About how old, I wonder?” said I.

“I’ve heard it’s Roman,” said mine host.

“Roman,” corroborated the landlord’s family all in chorus, like a final Amen.

The arch in question abutted on the end of a little cottage. It was in reality a fanciful grotto of the Georgian period with artificial rocks, and with a bust over its entrance and a niche on either side. An old woman who lived close by told me that she had learned it had been built a hundred years ago by a rich lady as a summer-house. The bust, she said, was that of Russell. The church of Enstone is a wonderful architectural epitome,

and reflects all states of the Churchman's thought from the idealist of the early ages to the materialist of the last century, who loved a hideous exhibition of zigzag scrolls displaying texts. In the graveyard one is somewhat astounded by the impious assurance of a departed parishioner who utters complaisantly with the Psalmist—

“I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness.”

Roc had been absent during my tour of inspection. He now rejoined me, having also been investigating according to his lights. It used to be his custom in France when his master's unit moved into a new village to reconnoitre all the fleshpots in the neighbourhood. He has an infallible architectural instinct which leads him immediately to discover the kitchen of any house he enters. Once there he relies on his genteel appearance and his way with the ladies, which seldom fails of the desired effect. There is no air of the mendicant about him on these occasions. He prosecutes his excursions in a business-like way, wasting no time on unappreciative people or meagre establishments; and if a cat should fly before him he does not fritter moments and energy in a futile chase of such an inedible baggage, but goes in the opposite direction, making shrewd guesswork for the saucer of milk that is bound to be hard by.

Soon after leaving Enstone we got into the main thoroughfare from Oxford to Worcester, with its hideous black-tarred surface, its close-cropped

edgings, and its telegraph poles. Motor-bicycles whizzed by like angry hornets bound on vindictive missions, clacking hideously, and motor-cars whined drearily from horizon to horizon. We deviated from this depressing highway where it turns down to Chipping Norton, as we had it in mind to see some remains of the Stone Age men, an agreeable anticipation sorting ill with the evil savour of petrol. The clouds still threatened thunder. It was windless, and in the hush a certain expectancy was abroad as if an incense of the earth ascended in prayer for rain. Here on the Rollright Hill it was noticeable how the may was giving place to the wild rose, for there was a wonderful unfolding of blossom and perfume in the high hedges on both sides. By a sharp turn to the left we rose up on to a ridge, which commanded a spacious prospect of the Cotswold Hills on the one hand and of the heights round Chipping Norton on the other. The simple little road over this exposed place, the fine expanse of view, a touch of wildness in the hill-top cultivation, and the proximity of thunder, filled me with right-mindedness for seeing Druidical remains. The first to show up should be on my right, a monolith called the King Stone. Presently it appeared: a strange hunched shape, surrounded by shining black railings, full six feet high, with sharp spikes turned rim-like outwards. A piece of sheet-iron painted white and bearing some legend of the Office of Works leaned up against and ticketed the venerable rock. The whole effect

was of a monkey in a cage. I had no heart to get off and see more. A couple of hundred yards farther, on the left hand, were the Stones. This is a fine circle. The stones are irregularly shaped and closely set, but not of imposing dimensions. Fitted tight round the circle like a choker collar is an iron railing. A key to the enclosure was to be had elsewhere.

I got off perfunctorily to look, but felt I could take no pleasure in the thing. The preservation of ancient monuments seems to be sadly misunderstood in this country. When will people learn that it is illusion and not fact that gives pleasure? Fact is the passion now, and we are ten times worse vandals than our ignorant ancestors, who on occasions made gateposts of cromlechs and quarried stone from decaying abbeys. They were ignorant and haphazardly superstitious. We are knowledgeable and matter of fact. We confound art and archæology, and pinch our imagination painfully, only allowing it liberty to walk abroad in the pointed shoes of accuracy. In this spirit we handle our ancient castles. We tear down the ivy and the moss that for centuries has been the delight of poets and painters. We expose and scarify. We plaster and point and rebuild so that nothing but the work of the twentieth century mason is apparent. We replace a Ruin by a Folly. Thus we can no longer hand ourselves back through the ages by touching a stone and saying, "This stone did see the very features of Margaret of Anjou. This other stone

did hear the screams of the tortured, the sobs of the broken-hearted." No! It is the spiritual quality of Illusion, the handmaid of Romance, in which we value the relics of the past, and our great heritage of such things should not be left to the care of the specialist in either archæology or architecture alone. The poet and the painter should have their say. So, dismally contrasting in power this great fettered mover of the imagination with that free one at Gagingwell, I passed by.

A little cottage on the left hand, about three hundred yards farther on, struck me as possessing a remarkable amount of character. Geraniums, soda-water bottles, and picture post-cards all gave one the impression of standing vigorously at attention. I instructed Roc to effect an introduction. He therefore walked into the house in his most engaging manner. In another moment a woman appeared. She wore a cap, and had a strong but kindly face. She seemed endowed with the solid integrity of an uncaged monolith.

"You can leave your dog here," said she.

I thanked her for her appreciation.

"Did you come to see the stones?" said she, "because I looks after them."

"I thought they looked a wild lot," said I. "I glimpsed them through their bars as I came along."

"Did you count them?" said she.

"No, I did not."

"Well, you couldn't have if you'd tried."

"Why not?"

"Nobody can count them the same twice running."

"Not even you ?"

"Nobody can count them. I've been here twenty years, and counted them and counted them scores of times, and still I makes 'em different."

"Dear me," said I. "How many are there ?"

"Seventy-five," said she without hesitation.

"Ah !" I said, "some one has counted them right, then."

"That's in the book," she said.

"Who put it there ?" said I.

"Oh, a gentleman from the Office of Works."

"How do you know he was right ?" said I.

"He was at it three weeks counting them, and he was from the Government, and it's in the book," said she.

I relented somewhat towards the railings, and we went back with the keeper of the stones and the key. She discoursed by the way of the visitors to the circle. There were the ordinary people who came up on Midsummer's Day to see the sun rise ; and there were strange unknown fraternities who stood bare-headed in the enclosure while one of their number preached a vehement sermon, "like they go on in the chapels" ; and there were sun-worshippers and moon-worshippers and what not. Solitary mystics, however, she had nothing to tell of. I remember a farmer in Guernsey, on whose land stood a huge dolmen, telling me that one morning early when he went to the fields he

saw a tall stranger with a great beard sitting on one of the cap-stones of the dolmen. He rose on seeing the farmer and beckoned him. When the farmer went near he poured out a strange liquid into a tiny vessel and set it on the cap-stone. Neither spoke. Presently the stranger lifted the little cup and drank of it, offering the remainder to the farmer. The latter, fascinated if not awed, partook. The host then bowed to his guest and to another not visible, and departed, never more to be seen.

“*And that,*” whispered the farmer into my ear, “*was the sign.*” And although he was not clear in any way what the sign was, it seemed to him a grave occasion, a momentous happening.

There was a good deal of form and observance about the counting business. Some stones were and some were not to be included in the computation, which, to say the least of it, was disturbing to the calculator. My guide counted them also with due solemnity.

“Eighty-five !” I said at last.

“And I makes seventy-five !” said she with ingenuous triumph.

The Whispering Knights, a cromlech, standing some three hundred yards away, is visible from the centre of the circle through a hole in one of the circumferential stones.

“Do the fairies dance here ?” I asked.

“They say that they do,” she replied. “They’re bound to come on the night before Midsummer’s Day. But that’s not right.”

“Have you been to see ? ” said I.

“Yes, I’ve been twice all by myself on purpose. And I’ve stood here and heard all the clocks round in the two valleys strike midnight and not seen a thing.”

“Ah ! ” said I, “but did you come before they put up the railings ? ”

“I can’t say as I did,” she replied. “Do you believe in the fairies ? ”

“I don’t believe in the railings,” said I.

“But you do believe in the counting ! ” she asked wistfully—there was no doubt that she did herself.

At Little Compton, adjoining a fine Tudor house, is a sweet little church with the quaintest tower imaginable. It looks as if a gable from the house had quarrelled with its neighbours, and transferred its adornment to the church. Back once more on to a main road, we soon passed the Four Shire Stone, a rectangular pillar that marks the conflux of Gloucester, Worcester, Warwick, and Oxford. Passing such a monument gives one rather a qualm, it is so difficult to know how to appreciate it. It was not railed off, however, so I took off my hat to it. Near this spot we passed a young woman on a bicycle. In walking up a hill later on she repassed us. But she still rode, and as she rode she read from a kind of magazine held above the handle-bars. I could not resist breaking in on her studies, and asking if she made a habit of reading while cycling. “No,” she said, getting off, “only when I go up hills. Then I don’t notice them.”

I glanced at her journal—it was a publication of fashion plates.

“How sad,” said I, “that a man has no literary equivalent whereby he could counteract the ennui of hill-climbing.”

At Moreton-on-the-Marsh, as we rode over the railway bridge, a signal clanked down, and a magnificent corridor train came in with its engine, haughty in the green and gold livery of the Great Western Railway, champing its eccentrics and fretting at the safety-valve.

“Roc,” said I, “what a splendid train! Let us go along with it for a little”—and we did even to Hartlebury.

Having thus unexpectedly been wafted at Time’s forelock, we proceeded leisurely to one of the smallest and most charming hamlets in England, built, as its name Hill Pool suggests, round a flagged and sedgy margent where water sleeps in the hollow of an upland. The red-brick houses, sandstone cliffs, fruit trees, and a green valley falling below all, drowsy with the sound of the Pool’s overflow, is only seen from one spot, a turn in the road. It is unsuspected, suddenly beheld, and lo! the traveller is in its midst!

The native rock of Hill Pool and its neighbourhood is a red sandstone, excellent for grinding knives. Hence, in this district, scythes and hay-knives are made in great quantities. At a place called Drayton I visited one of such works. The first process is that of sandwiching a bar of steel

between two bars of wrought iron. This is done by a simple welding with fire and anvil. The iron sandwich is then heated again.

Water-power, that drives all the machinery in this factory, turns a wheel that has iron studs at intervals round its rim at a dead even pace. These studs in passing operate a tilt-hammer that falls with a sharp and relentless monotony at about a hundred and thirty-five strokes to the minute. In front of this rapping tool sits a grave man on a curiously suspended chair, consisting of a wooden seat set at right angles to an iron rod hooked to the roof some twenty feet above. To him the iron sandwich, held in locked pincers, is handed after its second heating, and he flattens and draws it out under the tilt-hammer. As he takes a glowing bar with one hand he yields up with the other a half-shaped scythe-blade, never altering his expression, never taking his gaze from the unwearying, unvarying tilt-hammer before him. Thus with the furnace glow striking through the dim reek of the shop he seems a true figure of the destiny that watches jealously over the mediocrity of men.

The next building to which I was taken was a great contrast in activities. Here was heard a great whirling of wheels, and men seated astride of wooden balks were seen to lean forward over huge, furiously revolving masses of sandstone, appearing literally to be putting their noses to the grindstone, which as a result showered sparks like catherine-wheels. In reality they were hold-

ing scythes over the stones. There is great danger attached to this work. As the large grindstones wear down, small pulleys on the transmittion are replaced by larger ones, so as to compensate in speed for the reduced rim, and on occasions these stones are turned faster than their geological nature can hold, and consequently burst right under the face of the grinder.

The next process is a polishing of the knives on emery wheels. After having seen this I was conducted to the packing-room. This, unexpectedly, was the most alarming business of all. A man in corduroy trousers takes a dozen scythe blades. These he bunches side by side on a bench with their gleaming edges uppermost, a fearful array of cold steel to see if nothing else were toward. He now places a single sheet of brown paper over the blades and a whisp of straw on that, and then without further precaution sits down astride of his work and commences wrapping it into a package with twisted straw rope.

I left Hill Pool at six o'clock in the evening, unaccompanied by my good companion, Roc taking the rail and travelling independent to our destination. Through carpet-yielding Kidderminster I passed on to the highroad for Bridgnorth. The milestones between these two places express themselves with the licence of poetic economy, reading "Kid" on one face and "Brid" on the other. As twilight fell the moon, with a full and friendly face, rolled up, and the wind died away as if fearing to disturb the tender dusk that lay upon the

land like bloom upon a purple grape. To one who is going to travel the night through, the moon stands in a peculiar personal relationship not felt by bedward-going folk. To them, I thought as I looked at it, it would be merely "the moon," to me it was "my moon"; together we should travel westward through deserted ways, while men ceased from the powers of thought and movement.

Over the stately Severn I rode into Bridgnorth. The town stands upon a hill. In the gloaming it wore the aspect of a city of romance rising from the dark river bank, with here and there a lighted window; houses upon houses, irregular in line of roof and front, many half-timbered and bowed with age; and on the hill-crest, against the smoulder of the sunset, towers and a dome and cross.

The moon, although she promised fair at her rising, was destined to lend me the company of her light rather than her visage, for clouds soon drifted between us. Along the road I watched the gradual tendency of lights to disappear from the ground-floor and to show in the upper storeys, till they ceased altogether from the former and finally from the latter, and the houses were dark and silent. The strangeness of night possessed the road, and normal workaday values were changed. Suddenly at one place a fearful bird hovered above me, huge as the *Roc* of Arabian fable, stirring in me an involuntary qualm of the hobgoblin kingdom. Yet it was but a great fan-tailed grotesque cut in a high yew hedge looming

between me and the sky. When I rode into Much Wenlock it was well past the midnight hour. This town had all the appearance and feeling of a French town during the war that had been deserted. I got off my bicycle, and my footsteps rang hollowly on the road with a clatter of echoes. It seemed impossible to believe that in a few hours everyday life would be going on here as if nothing had happened. It was some time before even a friendly snore reached my ears. At a cross-roads a clock ticked with restrained ferocity. I am sure that in the daytime it does not behave like that. It was hard to entertain the reflection that this state of things is repeated for several hours out of every twenty-four. My map was on a very small scale. The choice of ways out of this place without any indication as to where they led to seemed manifold. I resigned myself to losing my way, and lost it at leisure. The spirit of mysticism enveloped me. I mounted my bicycle again, and silently zigzagged about the town before continuing my journey. Only in one place did I hear the sound of a human voice, and there I dismounted to eavesdrop for a moment. Two voices were at work—one of language in the mouth of a woman, the other of laughter, presumably of a merry little boy.

“My word!” said the voice, “I’ll give it you if you don’t shut up.” Whereon a peal of merriment.

“You’ll catch it, I tell you.” (Loud derision.)

“If you don’t keep quiet, I’ll give you a clip

on the ear'ole—my word I will." (Laughter louder than ever.)

Gruff male voice, "Shut up the both of you!" (Complete silence established.)

Taking the wrong road out of Much Wenlock, I presently corrected my error by means of my bicycle lamp and a sign-board. The byway through which I hoped to get on to the grand route for Shrewsbury seemed to lead through a pleasant countryside. In places it smelt strong of garlic; in others it was lit by innumerable glow-worms that shone with the brightness of stars. On my right, in the clouded moonlight, I discerned the ghostly form of the Wrekin, and I dismounted and sat on a gate to enjoy a sight of this hill that I might never again have under similar circumstances. I have noticed that the pleasure of a view is inevitably connected with the mood of the mind that sees it. And now, although there was hardly anything to be seen but a dim uncertain bluff, my frame of mind was the happiest, and so my enjoyment of the Wrekin was intense.

I soon got on to the great tarred road. Its surface was so dark as hardly to reflect any gleam from my weak little oil-lamp. But by night there was enjoyment to be had out of this kind of highway—an athletic thrill of pedalling till the spokes hummed and made a musical chord with the æolian telegraph wires. Into Shrewsbury I went by the English Bridge, and out again by the Welsh Bridge, and made good speed for the Border. In the dim dawn-light I saw the sharp pyramids of

the Breidon Hills—Wales was in view ! The hills would not cease now till they rose to the heights of Cadar Idris and Plynlimon towering above the salt sea waves.

But it was a cheerless dawn. Dismal showers of cold rain swept down from the Welsh valleys. In the full grey light men stirred abroad once more like chill facts borne in on the mind after a brief sojourn in Fairie.

For the sake of hearing the change in dialect that my wheels had effected for me during the night-watches I got off in Welshpool and inquired the time from an old fellow with a shaggy walking-stick and a rusty bowler hat. We seemed surrounded by clocks, one of which was actually striking the hour of seven, but with true Celtic politeness my man pulled out a horn-encased watch, and having corrected it by the striking clock, told me the hour.

“ Coming here on the Whitsuntide ? ” said he, eyeing my baggage. “ You starting early in the morning.”

“ I have been riding all night,” said I.

“ All night ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Not a possible ! ” said he. Then regarding my shorts and bare knees, “ That a very cold trousers to going in the night with,” he remarked.

“ I have not felt them so,” said I.

“ And you going all the night in them ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Not a possible ! ” said he.

I spoke to him in Welsh. "Dewks Anwyl," he answered in that language, "I thought you were an Englishman." I told him in English that I was. "All English," I said, "without a drop of Welsh blood in my veins."

"You English and talking Welsh," said he in my own tongue. "Well, indeed, that not a possible whatever."

Beating up the long two-mile hill out of Welshpool on that happy invention the third speed, I arrived at a signboard that on its left hand said Castell Caer Einion. At this little place I had once spent the night when walking in the winter from Herefordshire into Wales, and been well entertained. To go there now would be out of the way, but such a consideration has no weight in a long ride. Had I just been starting out after a night's rest and going half the distance that I proposed to myself, I should not have dreamed of deviating. But on a long ride time lost and extra mileage incurred seems to matter nothing.

In the inn-yard I encountered a spry wiry man dressed in well-cut breeches, and wearing them in the way that only those who have had to do with some branch of sport can ever do for all the tailors in the world. He asked me where I was going. I told him, "Into the heart of the mountains behind Harlech."

"Oh, Harley," said he, putting me straight as to the English way of pronouncing that place. I ordered breakfast in half an hour, and going into

a straw-loft, fell sound asleep till the meal was announced. The house had changed hands since I had stayed there before. The present landlord was some time stud-groom to Lord Powis, and from his youth up had been employed in the stables of great gentlemen. He bore an air of distinction about him when making known his will to the peasants of the village that sat as naturally on him as on any to the manner born. He was a great fisherman, moreover. The inn was full of sporting pictures; the neat and pleasant air of the harness-room pervaded it; all was clean, spick and span.

When I took to my wheels again everything wore an astonishingly different aspect. It did not seem the same place to which I had come barely an hour and a quarter ago. The night, the drab sunrise, the chilly rains, seemed uncertain events of a remote period. Now the sun shone, and the blue sky gleamed with well-fleeced clouds shepherded from the west. The green hillsides sparkled, thrush songs burst from every tree, and in their interval was heard the low murmur of flowing waters. We were in Wales! And the bardic land in her best lyric trim was giving us welcome. Even my stern bicycle, born in Birmingham, rose to this moving occasion, and scaled incredible hills on the top gear. It was a fair-day in Welshpool, and many a ribboned steed and farmer's trap, with wife and daughters all in holiday mood, we passed. The scenery here is charming. Little hills, of no great height but

sudden in the ascent and wooded, enfold the winding Banwy and the many valleys of its tributaries. The river, with its dark oak-shaded pools, shelving to golden fleets and gentle cataracts, seems a paradise for trout. It flows from the bare uplands and grander hills of the Pass of Vedwen, once the stronghold of the most formidable band of outlaws that Wales has known since the Edwardian Conquest. Up to its source, except at one point, the road follows the Banwy within earshot of its many water-breaks.

I stopped to inquire the name of a brook from an old man who was trimming a privet hedge round one of the ugliest little chapels I have ever seen. Having answered my question, he inquired where I had come from.

"Near Birmingham," said I.

"Birmingham," said he. "I been hear a many people talking of that place. Somewhere near the London?"

"Somewhere near. Have you been to London?"

"No, indeed. But I been once to the Parkgate."

"What did you think of Parkgate?"

"Ow Anwyl, that a difference on this place, and not a person understand the Welsh."

"Are you married?" said I.

"Ay, indeed; and got a many childrens, but they all going to the big towns. That big towns swallowing everybody now."

"You come and pray in this chapel?" I asked.

"Ay, and make a singing."

"Why did they build it so ugly, I wonder?"

“Well, indeed,” said he, after a little reflection, “God making even that one to looking beautiful.”

Passing under the brow of Moel Bentyrch, a very striking hill like a vast rock elephant that can be seen for a great way off, and looks in the distance at least three times its actual height, the road continued to rise uphill. Approaching Garthbeibio, the character of the country changed completely. There were fewer woods, and the Banwy ran smoothly through flat meadowland. But after Garthbeibio this semi-pastoral scene rapidly gave place to another as I approached the pass called Bwlch-y-Fedwen. Trees ceased altogether, and then cultivation, except in favoured spots. Although these hills are not clothed in heather, but in rough grass and rush, and although their crests and flanks are not broken by rocky escarpments, they look as wild as the stories of their old outlaw denizens lead one to expect. The memory of these men still lingers in this region with a surprising freshness, and in bar parlours far removed from here their name is to this day mentioned in a hushed voice.

The Gwylltion Cochion Mawddwy, or the Wild Red Men of Mawddwy, were a mysterious people like the Doons of Exmoor, except that they were a swarthy race, and boasted no code of chivalry. They lived in the remotest and most inaccessible part of these hills, and supported themselves by making raids on all the surrounding districts. But their acts of violence became so great that some effort was at last made to get rid of them.

In 1554 Lewis Owen, Baron of the Exchequer of Wales and Sheriff of Merioneth, himself headed a band of men and set out for the stronghold of the robbers. It was on Christmas Eve, and the Wild Red Men of Mawddwy were carousing round blazing fires that roasted more than one ill-gotten ox. All sections of the tribe were met, and men and women quaffed the mellow Welsh metheglin in the keen mountain air, till no doubt all vigilance was relaxed and the cold December stars danced to sounds of rollicking over the fires of the Red Banditti. Thus Baron Owen, approaching stealthily, fell on them. After the attack eighty men were taken alive and led down into the valley, and as Christmas day dawned, were hanged on the bare trees of a little wood in the Bwlch-y-Fedwen. In that dim light, as Baron Owen stood and watched the execution, a fierce-eyed woman suddenly confronted him. Tearing open her dress at the bosom, she cried, "These yellow breasts have given suck both to the murdered and to those that shall wash their hands in your blood!"

A year after, when Baron Owen was coming from Welshpool through the Bwlch-y-Fedwen with a retinue of mounted servants, at a spot in the road within sight of the grave of those who had been hanged, now surmounted by a great heap of stones, on the other side of the valley, their way was obstructed by felled trees. As soon as the cavalcade was brought to a halt a shower of arrows fell upon them. One of them struck Owen in the face. Those of his servants that were

unhurt escaped. The Baron was taken and stabbed to death, while, according to the sentence of their mother's curse, the avengers of the executed men washed their hands in the blood that flowed from their victim.

With reflections on these things in my mind, I crossed the top of the pass and rode down the gloomy defile. The clouds were much lower here than in the valley I had come up. They drew up from the sea with a lowering front, trailing scarves of mist along the hill-tops. Presently I came to a little farm on the right hand. Two men were perched up in the top of a big apple-tree overhanging the road endeavouring to get at a swarm of bees that had settled in the thicket between them. I addressed a general remark to this group, asking them if they could tell me where Baron Owen had been murdered.

"Baron Owen?" said one of them. "You a relation of Baron Owen?"

"No," said I.

"Relation to the Cochion Mawddwy?"

"No."

"Are you a preacher?"

"No."

"Making some book?"

"Well, damn!" interjected his companion suddenly, applying one hand to his haunches, on which the conversation was diverted to the subject of bees.

When the swarm was safely hived the first speaker accompanied me a hundred yards down

the road. About twenty feet up a steep bank could be seen the remains of a more ancient way. This identical spot, marked by no special feature of either stock or stone, is called Lliidiart Baron Owen (Baron Owen's Gate). Then, with that surprising vigour of narrative in which, as an artistic power, the Welsh excel any other raconteurs I have ever heard, the old man related the doings of the Wild Red Men as tradition had handed it to him. He told of the robbers as if it had been matter of last week's news instead of three and a half centuries ago; how they lived; how they were caught; how they were hanged (now pointing across the valley to where the great stone heap still marks the grave of those executed eighty); how the curse of the woman was made to come to effect; and finally, how the last stragglers of the band were rounded up. Then in a whisper he told me of certain living who were suspected of still preserving in their veins the blood of that dark and evil race.

When I had got down to Mallwyd and was riding to Dinas Mawddwy I turned to look back up the valley. To one whose mind still dwelt on the Wild Red Men and the bloody murder of the judge, it was a shock of no small surprise to observe that the great broad bases of the hills whence I had come glowed with a living red. After a moment of astonishment I saw that the effect was caused by immense shrubberies of rhododendrons growing wild on all the lower slopes round Dinas Mawddwy. Leaving that village on

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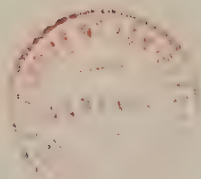


A LITTLE MAID FROM MERIONETH.

my right, I made through the hill barrier of Cadar Idris by the Bwlch-y-oer-Drws—the Gap of the Chilly Door. This is much steeper, more rugged, and in its way wilder than the other. The road goes up to over a thousand feet, and there, high up, seen from the threshold of that Chilly Door, my goal appeared, the mountains of Ardudwy: Rhinog Fawr, where still the wild goat pastures; Diphwys, the arch frowner; and Llethr, in the hollow of whose lap lies the dreadful lake where Horror walks by day. There they stood, cloud topping their stormy crests and glooming them with purple shadows, while the sun danced upon the shining estuary of the Mawddach at their feet.

“The station-master is tolerable,” said Roc, when I met him two hours later. “He’s been feeding me on chocolate. But I liked the last guard better. He gave me a bone belonging to another dog.”





THE SILENT WAY

A CANAL BOATMAN'S CHANTY.

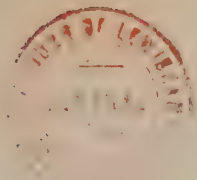
DRIFTING, drifting, always drifting
Down the Silent Way ;
Scenes dissolving, landscapes shifting,
New horizons lifting, lifting
All the livelong day.

“ Good mare Bess, you'll not need chiding
(Tow-line strained amain
Deeply laden we are riding).
You will keep us gliding, gliding,
With our bright reflections sliding.
(Our new paint shows plain.)

“ You may know we have no learning,
Simple folk are we.
All our lives, through straight and turning,
In the Cut we've made our earning ;
(Sailor boys fret sick with yearning
Far from home at sea) ;
Bedroom, parlour, cook-fire burning,
Here our homesteads be !

“ Reading, writing—there's no boundings !
(Learning's only strife.)
Though we sail in shallow soundings
We have mighty big surroundings
That'll give us more than groundings
In the Book of Life.”

Drifting, drifting, always drifting
Down the Silent Way ;
Scenes dissolving, landscapes shifting,
New horizons lifting, lifting
All the livelong day.



THE SILENT WAY.

An account of a journey from London to Rugby along the tow-path of the Grand Junction Canal in May 1923.

ON a drowsy May morning I emerged from my London lodging and directed the wheels of my bicycle towards the neighbourhood of Bayswater. I was bound for the heart of the Midlands, not by road nor yet by rail, but by the water highway called the Grand Junction Canal. Along this route, borne on the water's very self, or pedalling along the tow-path by its side, I intended to renew a slight acquaintance with a community almost unknown by the world that it so faithfully serves.

To the north of Paddington Station lies the terminus proper of this waterway, and here, on any day when the sun shines, you may see one of the strangest sights that is to be had anywhere in London. Flotillas of brightly coloured boats with curved prows and bold rudder-boards ride at the quay-sides. Each gaily panelled cabin at the stern of every boat is a home. And you may judge of the state of respectability and the house-pride of the inmates by the furniture that appears outside as well as in. For here not only do you have your ceilings and your walls frescoed up to

the hilt, but you affect pictures on your outside walls as well. Even your chimney-pot is not neglected ; you adorn it with rims of brass, from one to four, according to the set of your taste. The tiller comes to your hand fragrant with posies. Your jugs, basins, water-cans, sugar-tongs, and tea-caddies are all of a piece with the fixtures, some bearing names and dates as well, and some mottoes. As to your mops, boat-hooks, and broom-handles, they go to work more lively than barbers' poles.

And the people who live in these little homes are, for the most part, simple and stout-hearted. For the most part they are shaped, or being shaped, by that great ruling principle of Nature where only the fittest survives, and some there are who are being broken by it. The more lucky have pride in their homes and their labours. To them life has glory, and the Canal is a gleaming road winding over the countrysides of England, for ever open and for ever fresh. But for the less lucky the Canal is a terrible power of stagnation and scum and filth that dogs them wherever they go. By day it stares coldly at them and obstructs them, and by night it speaks to them under their pillow with chilly menace, whether they are drunk or sober. It seems to say, " You are going down and down ! Below the air is the water. Below the water is mud and slime. There is nothing below that but Hell. You are going down ! " Can Venice show a greater wonder than this Paddington Basin ?

For me and my bicycle, on that drowsy May

morning, the Canal was nothing but a great silent way as romantic as mysterious, and when we turned down from Bishop's Road on to the tow-path that leads from Paddington Basin to the country, London appeared to vanish instantly and we were in a new world. Wherever it wound, by the small town garden, the tenement dwelling, or the factory, the Canal dominated the works of brick and iron by its own personality. At times it struck attitudes of the weird and the bizarre, but in general it contrived to give a thorough-going aim of rusticity to the gravest labours of the engineer and the mason. At one place I stopped to take a last look at the folk of the Metropolis as they rode this way and that on the tops of buses. They all wore the same town-bound look, and not one of them cast a glance towards the underworld where I stood. It was as though I watched them through a telescope from another sphere.

Away we trundled along the tow-path, and imperceptibly the town gave place to the country.

The outskirts of London, where the green blade first begins, have a sordid scarified appearance like a war-devastated area, as if Nature, anticipating the builder, sickened of a fever which poisoned her beauty. Over such a blasted land as this I saw the buildings of Wormwood Scrubs Prison.

Beside a glass-works I met two men having their dinner-hour smoke. They told me that their works were the most up-to-date in the world and the best. You poured molten glass in at one end of a machine, and in a twinkling the other end

presented you with a bottle. That, they held, was the finest achievement that had ever been known. Whatever was the virtue of the machinery, it seemed to me a triumph in factory management that men should take such a pride in their establishment and find in their work so much happiness. I congratulated them on their contentment.

One of them said, "We could blow you fifty paste-pots to the minute, and perhaps that would satisfy you!"

Every now and then I came upon large tracts of country where the refuse of London was being deposited from barges on to the land. A steel grab on a steam crane lifted the concentrated squalor out of the barges and dropped it into trucks, and the new territory advanced by cliffs and headlands as much as thirty feet above the old level.

Fifteen miles or so from Paddington I arrived at Cowley, where was the first lock. Hitherto the country had been dull and uneventful, but after Cowley it took on a livelier turn.

At Uxbridge there is a boat-building yard. Here I made it my business to become acquainted with the man who painted the boats, for, as I have hinted, colour is a very particular and exclusive feature of all barges. It is noteworthy that merry-go-rounds and ice-cream carts have kindred schemes of colouring, though they are not by any means so uniform as canal boats. Some years ago I questioned a barge-builder as to why it was that nothing new in the way of colouring and decoration

was ever introduced on the Canal, and he told me of a painter who had once ventured to make a boat look more up-to-date. But the captain rejected the whole scheme at sight, and every bit of the boat had to be done afresh. The foreman of this yard at Uxbridge had also had regrettable clashes in this respect, as I gathered from the head-shaking and the smile sardonic with which he listened to my remarks on the catholicity of the waterman's taste for good colour.

"Yes," said he; "if the colour's all right, the boat don't leak!"

I was now introduced to the master painter, and I went with him to examine some of the work of his own hand.

There are two schools of artistry on the Canal—one simple, and the other florid to an excess. To the mind of the waterman there is no question as to which is the better. For him, providing he gets his colours right, the design cannot be too intricate. But since the large rise in the costs of labour it is only the wealthy waterman, who owns his own boats and can pay for his fancy, that can afford a really magnificent barge. But it is worthy of note that even if he gets his way he will not have gaudiness and clash, for, though he has no eye for design, he sticks true to his artistic principle in colour. A telling red, a blue such as the sky wears in breezy weather, a yellow as favoured by the dandelion, and much fine brass is his idea of decoration. He will tell you on reflection that a little green in moderation is desirable, and white

and black for certain backgrounds. This is apart from the panels that portray landscapes. Here the artist is expected to run riot with whatever mixtures of colour he pleases.

My friend the painter belonged to the simple school, and I could not but think that the effects he achieved were very much finer than those of the florid craftsman. He treated his rudders and tillers with broad bands of colour in place of bunches of grapes and posies; his bows with circles, each containing a bright primary; and his square towing masts, which in a barge only rise a few feet above the deck, with large narrow diamonds. But in his panels, as he explained to me, he let himself go a little. His favourite device was a splendid chateau-mansion in warm browns wrought in a curious convention of perspective, with a simultaneous marine and mountain background, in the middle distance of which sails or swans were always in evidence. Both he and the foreman were careful to point out that all those pictures came entirely out of the head of the artist. However that may be, I venture to think that the subconscious part of him kept his brush moving as true to type as the hieroglyphic painter of the ancient Egyptians. True to type; for the first movements of art are essentially universal as are the winsome ways of children, typical not of race or climate or time or influence, but of humanity. Self-expression! How it is dragged in the dirt by Bohemians and would-be's! But the simple soul finds infinite pleasure in expressing

himself even by the proxy of the public painter. And this, through the operation of immutable laws, keeps the public painter uniform in his works.

Leaving Uxbridge, the natural beauties of the country grew on either hand, and the villages were more interesting ; and on passing Rickmansworth, which is a charming little place, we drew towards that ancient stronghold of robbers, the Chiltern Hundreds, more celebrated now for its breezy chalk uplands, its fragrant beechen woods, and bluebell dingles. At one place the Canal wound its way through a lordly park that sloped upward on either hand. Here stood venerable oak-trees once more renewing their youth with tender foliage, and giant horse-chestnuts in their prime of blossom, leaning over the Canal and casting down such massive shadows and sombre reflections in the water as to conjure apprehensions of mermaids in spite of the knowledge of locks and sluices.

Hitherto I had passed very few boats, steam or horse-drawn, going either way, as Monday is a slack day on this part of the Canal. Now I saw a young woman coming to prepare the next lock for some boat not yet in sight. She wore a blue dress trimmed with some fine hand-made lace, and walked with a distinction which is common to women of the Canal. When I first caught sight of her she was coming from the shadow of a great copper beech into the soft sunlight of the evening, that shone on her braided golden hair and bathed with warmth her weather-bronzed

complexion. She looked not so much a natural Eve in this great park land as a wonderful new masterpiece of Nature never seen on earth before, not only harmonising with the trees, the grass, the sky, and the water, but completing them in one picture always to be remembered, suffusing the very sunlight with the radiance of a soul. Yes, I doubt not, she was a queen of hearts this creature. Yet she is but one of many in the world of barges. For it is a notable thing that the men who have been born and bred to this life are not so very different to look at from the labouring mankind of England. But with the women it is otherwise. Besides domestic work they take equal shares with the men in winding the sluice paddles, towing a loaded barge that has lost way, and backing out the heavy lock gates. And it would seem by results and by comparison with their more civilised sisters that this kind of thing is what the female physique demands, rather than Victorian repose, rather than Georgian jerks, for they acquire a magnificent carriage and grace of motion when walking that no school of deportment could possibly inculcate. But there is another fact about them, less concrete, a certain calmness of demeanour and (when not engaged in the frequent and customary badinage of the water highways) a peaceful habit of expression that is far from what is known as "resignation." I can but attribute it to that strange life of gliding, gliding, for ever gliding over endless levels of silent water.

At the next lock I came upon two empty barges

towing abreast. They were worked by a man and two boys. The man spoke with an accent that savoured of the York and Lancaster borderland. He looked at me, I thought, a little sourly. Had it not been for this I should have asked him for a ride on his boats. As it was, after a little uneven conversation, I passed on. Several boats went by me bound for London, and, without exception, they all carried pots of wild flowers — bluebells, cowslips, and buttercups — displayed on their cabin-roofs.

At King's Langley I left the tow-path, and took to the road to search for a night's lodging. The change from the exceptional to the ordinary highway was astonishing.

I had cycled somewhere about thirty-six miles at an absolute dead level (with the exception of the little rises at locks and occasional bridges). All the objects I had passed, whether moving or stationary, had been of a tranquil nature. The people had all been of a peculiar type, and dressed in a quiet and unobtrusive, if unusual, way. Now I rode uphill and down dale, motors whizzed past



with nerve-racking fury, and the semi-town dress of the folk hurrying this way and that jangled the serenity which my ride had engendered. I felt there was no peace to be had until I accorded better with my surroundings, so I pedalled on the top gear with the greatest speed I could command.

After a while I saw an inn that took my fancy. There I entered, and found all things up to the height of expectation.

The inn where I slept was an old coaching establishment, and full of unexpected rooms and good appointments. Here the pull-bell ropes of plush and tapestry flourished in tertiary Georgian magnificence; shutters and spacious cupboards, shiny chintz, hunting pictures, and glass-shaded waxen fruits paraded themselves as current articles of use and ornament, and not fusty remnants of a bygone age. Mine host, who had courteously come to entertain me when his bar guests had gone, was a man of definite opinions. The thing that vexed him chiefly was how the public had forsaken cricket as a national game and gone mad over football. He held forth at great length on this. Cricket and horse-racing, he averred, made England the great lady that she has been. Football was only fit for emotional people and Bolsheviks. Thus with these comfortable conservative sentiments laid to heart, and conscious of the respectability of this old-world house, and that I lay in the midst of a lush land where watercress is cultivated by the acre, sleep came to me most divinely.

The morning was warm, misty, and silent, and, looking from my window, I was much struck by a reflection cast in a placid reach of the river that flowed before the inn. Beyond the reach appeared a lawn-like margin, from which apple-trees with limed trunks and loaded with blossom spread their arms upwards. Between them great masses of yellow gillyflowers ranged themselves. This in itself was a pretty sight, but in reflection it had a greater power, for it seemed to lure the mind from the beaten tracks of thought to the region of abstracts, where language fails and the soul is baffled for expression. I might look on this scene a thousand times but never again see the same reflection. Such things catch the breath, striking the heart with new awe at the mystery of life.

Away on into the heart of the Chilterns I trundled on the tow-path. Lock by lock I mounted up, and came at last to the highest stretch of water, known as the Summit. Here the Canal goes in a long cutting, beautifully wooded. As I overhauled two barges, the foremost with its little steam-engine towing the second or "butty," I had a good opportunity of noticing how the bright colours of the boats went with the scheme of Nature, for the trees and the undergrowth in the cutting were very varied. I could not but find that they agreed extraordinarily well. The primitive sense of art that made the watermen such exacting critics of the work of the boat painters, and kept them consistent, is no doubt the same as instructs the Indian in the decoration of his totem pole and

the African in the beautiful but simple arrangements of colours in his grass mats. Climbing out of the cutting for a glimpse of the surrounding country, I came into the sweet flow of the upland air of the chalk downs, and saw their bluff shapes rising close at hand, some all of a soft even green, others laid with flaming trails of gorse.

The Canal's highest level, which was at the bottom of this cutting, is a bare four hundred feet, but it commands a wonderful view of cultivation and massive trees and winding roads. It was very pleasant to lie in the sward here and look into the mild blue of distance and know that this was a Promised Land which could and would be reached. Two brimstone butterflies passed by, thinking me, no doubt, some intrusive monster. But, I reflected, they might console themselves, for when I had got myself into that blue distance I should be to these same butterflies a speck more contemptible than a grain of dust on the old Roman Road behind us.

At the end of the Summit reach, ere the Canal descends to the plain, there is a toll-house, where all loaded boats are gauged. With the master of this establishment I had some talk. I inquired particularly what boats were ahead of me. He told me that a Mr Nile had gone down about an hour before. A very good fellow he was, but not long since he had suffered a sad bereavement, for his daughter had fallen into the Canal and been drowned.

As the descent was tolerably rapid, the locks

were very close together and the Canal winding. At an inn by a road that crossed the water I stayed to refresh the inner man. It was also a shop for the watermen, and stocked for them groceries and vegetables, lines, gaily-coloured whiplashes, and halfpenny lucky-bags for their children. These little shops, which are to be found from point to point all along the Canal, have a fine old-world flavour about them, a touch of things not hinted at since nursery days, a Noah's ark feeling.

Tied up to the Canal side just below here was a barge loaded with straw. Two girls were on board. They were waiting for their parents, who had gone to load another barge. They had gathered huge bunches of cowslips, which they now displayed on the cabin-roof in jam-jars. I admired their nosegays, and they invited me to come on board. The elder girl was seventeen, the younger eleven.

"Have you ever been to school?" said I.

"Yes, we've been to school; but we haven't had a schooling."

"Can you read?"

"Our names, us can."

"Can you write?"

"Our names, us can."

"Were you born on the water?"

"I was born in a 'ouse," said the younger with some pride.

"Yes, she was," said the elder, who, it seemed, had nothing to glory in herself.

"Have you got a house beside the boats?" said I.

"Yes, we've got a 'ome," said the elder.

"How often do you go there?"

"We gets to go in it about once in a month."

"And what do you do when you go into it?"

"We puts a fire in the 'ouse and sits in the parlour."

"You like doing that, don't you?"

"Oh, it's ever so grand."

"Do you ever sleep the night there?"

"No; us never sleeps there."

There is no shyness about these Canal children. They are very frank in manner, and easy to talk to. They come of parents who have the simplicity of sailors, curiously combined with a shrewd knowledge of affairs. The little cabin where the children were had its full quota of shining brass. On the left of the door was a vertical row of knobs balanced on nails so as to project.

"What do you do with these?" I asked.

"Us cleans them every morning," said the younger.

"They're bed-knobs," the elder volunteered.

"You can get 'em second-'and." She directed a meaning glance towards my bicycle, thinking no doubt that two or three perched on the handle-bars would make that excellent drab hack much more commendable both to the rider and the world.

Taking farewell of the children of the straw boat, who, like wild things freed from a temporary restraint, burst into song, I pushed on for Leighton Buzzard. It was not long before I sighted

and overtook Mr Nile. His boats were towing abreast, with himself at the helm. I recognised him at once as the man who had looked sourly on me the night before.

"I wondered where you'd got to," he shouted out when he saw me.

"You must have got away early this morning," said I. "What time did you start?"

"With the light," he answered.

What with the interest he seemed to take in my movements and the sorrow I could not but feel for him when thinking of what the toll-house man had said, I forgot the sourness, and asked him if he would take me on board for a reach.

He assented. Accordingly at the next lock I boarded him. He was past the middle age, his hair grizzled, his face weather-beaten. He wore a moustache. The cut of the lower part of his face was hard, but the expression of his eyes was kindly.

After the Chiltern Hills this great plain of water-meadows had seemed tedious on the bicycle. Not



so, however, did it appear from the cabin-hatch of the barge. It took on a new aspect. Those who have never been on a horse-towed barge will hardly be able to appreciate the delicious luxury of that sensation. It is the only vehicle I have ever tried which I have not wished to increase the speed of. Put me on a motor, I care no longer about seeing the country. Speed becomes my sole object. When travelling by rail I always see to it that I take the fleetest wheeled train that goes my way, even if I have to do so at great discomfort with changes and waits. But on this barge the whole glory of the thing was the slowness. Traveling on a cloud can hardly give a more ethereal sense than this wonderful even gliding, with all the mild landscape dissolving before one's gaze.

Mr Nile did not make observations unless spoken to. Presently he went to walk behind the horse, and the youth who had been hitherto thus engaged came on board. The boy in the other boat and this new-comer were brothers. The elder was seventeen. He could neither read nor write. He had a pleasant happy expression, which I think must have been habitual, for although I saw him on and off mostly through the following day it never left him. It seemed even to affect his voice, for his speech sounded soft and rich, as if honied by a sweetness in the nature of him. I forget his name, but I will call him Jim. The younger, to whom I will award the name of Bob, looked considerably older than his brother. His face was more lined, and, to use the expression

of Mr Nile, he "werrited." He could both read and write. Of all the Canal folk I have seen I have invariably noticed a marked difference in the physiognomy of those who had education and those who had not. The former always looked older, their faces were more lined, and they were not as a rule so pleasant. The latter often looked like a different race. I fear me that education forced on our young folk that have no aptitude for it often saddens them, and frequently stultifies and represses great natural aptitudes of humour and resource.

"Were you born on the water?" said I to the two boys.

"Yes," said Jim. "Both on us."

"But father's not on the water now," said Bob. "He's got a 'ome."

"Now I shouldn't wonder if you've both got sweethearts already?" said I.

"'E 'as," said Jim.

"And so 'as 'e," said Bob.

"It's a wonder to me how you can do your courting if you're always on the move in different places," said I. "But I suppose you always keep track of each other. Where are your two sweethearts now?"

"Mine's gone up in front. I reckon we should get even with her to-morrow night," said Jim.

"Mine's gone the other way," said Bob. "We passed her yesterday."

"Some of you, I suppose, have sweethearts on the water and some on the shore?" I suggested.

"Them as is on the water mostly reckons to 'ave sweethearts with them as is on the water," said Bob.

Thus, chatting agreeably, the town of Leighton Buzzard, with its tall grey spire and red houses, drew upon us like a dream. Then the lads unfolded to me the sad tale of how their captain's daughter was drowned in the fall of last year. They never knew how she slipped into the lock, as it was night; but the water, rushing through the sluice that her father had just opened, drew her down, and so she perished. They said that she was a very bonny girl, and well liked by every one. They hinted, moreover, that since that awful night the Captain was not the same man that he had been. These two boats we were in were the property of Mr Nile. (The greater proportion of canal boats are owned by firms.) Indeed, the *Alice Anne*, which drifted beside the one I was in, was called after that poor girl who was gone. Till that voyage the Captain had always taken the water with his family, he and his daughters (as is customary) working the boats. But since then he would have no women on the boat, and his wife and other two daughters were left ashore.

As I wanted to get to Fenny Stratford in fair time that afternoon, I announced my intention of cycling on.

"You can do as you mind about that!" said the Captain, with the manner I had put down as sourness on the previous day. As I went off I waved good-bye, to which the boys responded;

but Mr Nile, I could see, was taking good care to show no emotion.

The three tractive powers on the Canal are the horse, steam, and crude oil. The two latter (engined barge and towed companion) generally travel by night as well as by day, whereas those who travel with horses always tie up for the night and stable. I have said that there are shops from point to point along the route. There are also stables. The keepers of these stables, besides lodging the horses, do a good business in selling fodder. The "feed away" of a canal horse is a surprising performance. Mr Nile's steed, as I have it on his authority, gets through almost a whole sack of oats in a day, not to mention chaff and hay. But then he is always feeding. At crack of dawn a tin nose-bag is hung on his head, and remains there for the rest of the day, being replenished whenever necessary. As he cannot whistle at his long monotonous work, he dips his head with a peculiar rhythm, which no doubt stands him in good stead for music. Fifty tons to be dragged along from twenty to thirty miles a day is no joke without a tune.

Fenny Stratford (*Finny Lock* in the vernacular) is a favourite place for boats to tie up. The waterside lies on the outskirts of the little town, and consists of a lock whose fall is not deeper than a couple of feet, and a swing bridge. On the far side is the official domicile of the lock-keeper, and on the town side there is a public-house, a shop, and stables. The shop and stables are owned by a Mr Tarbox,

whose acquaintance I had contracted during the war, and towards whom I now made my way. Mr Tarbox, with his shining morning face and his air of easy prosperity in the midst of his well-filled bins of grain, looked very much the land-lubber after the sterner types I had been passing all the way from London.

One does not generally connect the Canal and its ways with the sea. And yet they are wonderfully similar. The best parts in the sailor are common to the waterman, and the houses where they traffic might just have been packed up as they were and brought from a coastal fishing village. Thus where Mrs Tarbox ruled between shop and kitchen and parlour leading to parlour, there was an indefinable sense of sea air without sea.

Going after tea with Mr Tarbox to a loft adjoining the house, I saw written on the windowsill, "Feb. 6, 1896, Man in the Chimney."

"What's the meaning of that?" said I.

"Oh, that's a tale, that is," said Mr Tarbox. "That was afore ever I come. That used to be a public before I come, that did. The old man who kept it he were very fond of talking and telling his customers all about his doings, which isn't wise in a man at any time. And that's what they tell me—one day a great many couples of boats kept following one another through the cut, and the old man took nigh on twenty pounds that day. It may have been twenty pounds all but a penny, or it may have been a shilling or two

more—I'm sure I couldn't say to the exact farthing. But, however, what he done, he told his customers as was all drinking there, 'I've took twenty pound to-day.'

"Well, that night when every one was sound asleep in their beds a young man as was working on one of the boats and had been drinking in the bar and hears what the old man had been saying of, comes out, creeping like a cat, and up on the roof he goes, and then he puts just his one foot, then his other, in the chimley of the bar parlour, and down he thinks to slide. He didn't reckon as they'd put in a close grate—he hadn't took no notice on that.

"Well, next morning they couldn't get the fire to go up straight—no, they couldn't—and there they went poking and poking in the chimley, but the smoke would come puffing back at them, so they had to get a sweep. And the sweep come upstairs here and took out they bricks you see not sticking in quite straight. That's what he done; he took out they bricks, and there he finds the man



with 'is coat stickin' up all round 'is face and his arms stickin' straight up above him. And he was a goner ! Yes," said Mr Tarbox with gay callousness that I felt to be a little hard even towards robbers, "yes ; that's where they pecked him out !"

Two boats had already tied up for the night in a bywater beyond the lock. They presented the appearance of floating shoes reminiscent of the homestead of that doughty Old Woman who had "so many children." They belonged to that lower grade of water-folk to which I have once made allusion. The fathers of these many unhappy-looking youngsters were in the public-house, and not likely to issue forth a moment before they must. The women were busy in their cabins repairing the ravages of wear and tear. A little daughter of this host came at my invitation to receive a packet of sweets. A bargee aristocrat sat in the shop lecturing Mr Tarbox on the urgent necessity of speaking the truth in spite of every one. Not that Mr Tarbox had erred in this particular. It was merely a piece of gratuitous philosophy good for shopkeepers and stable-owners.

"The truth is the truth," said the spokesman. "And if I tell you that I am a better man than you are that'll be the truth too !"

Turning round he saw me and my young friend. His didactic vein veered and took to utterances on good manners.

"Now !" he cried. "What'll you say to the gentleman when he gives you them sweeties ?"

The little girl put on as comical an air as I have ever seen in a child, and said, "Nothing."

"Oh, my gracious," cried the man. "That's not the way I was brought up!"

She was, however, as good as her word, and took the sweets without uttering a sound. "She can speak the truth anyhow," said I. But when she got to the door she turned round, and, tilting her head, gave me a smile that must have come straight from her small heart.

After a little while Mr Nile arrived. He was a man with a reputation for resting only when it was dark, so that he would not tie up at "Finny Lock," but at the next stables some seven or eight miles nearer his destination. There was something singularly attractive about this undemonstrative and somewhat cynical man, and I was now as anxious to go on with him as I had been the day before not to bear him company. I did not wish to force my presence, however, so I sat on a wooden bollard watching his boats drift away. He himself was in the shop making hasty purchases. Presently he hurried past me with an armful of loaves. I wished him "Good-night."

"Follering us to-morrow?" he called out without pausing.

"What time will you start?" said I.

"With the light," he shouted back.

As there was no bed to be spared in Mr Tarbox's house, I slept on the floor of his sitting-room. The noise of a steamer churning its way

through the lock woke me up. I looked at my watch. It was 4.30. The light was already come, and I sprang up and dressed, while good Mrs Tarbox came down and brewed me some tea. That curious craving to travel merely for the sake of travelling, in the satisfying of which comes such a feeling of personal gratification, must be an instinct. For, like sport, although one makes excuses for it, it is the joy of it itself and not for any end which it may appear to serve that stirs the romantic music in a man and thrills him to the core—an instinct stronger and more glamorous in the early morning than at any other time and more glorious, for then the unsympathetic are all abed and asleep; and when men sleep even the great tarred roads look more than three parts natural. I did not follow the Canal to Wolverton, but came there by the public highway, guessing that the Captain would be by now well on beyond that town. I caught him up as his barges were disappearing under a bridge. He looked, I thought, coldly at me, and gave no sign either of recognition or greeting. I wheeled my bicycle on to the bridge. An inn stood on my left hand, with its yard and garden abutting on to the Canal bank. It was six o'clock. A sallow-faced youth stood in the yard regarding the Captain and his shipping as they glided by with a disinterested stare. I bawled out to this fellow at the top of my voice—

“Can you stir them up in the house and get them to give me breakfast?”

Mr Nile turned his head slightly as if he heard

a noise in the tree-tops, and said, "Your breakfast is waiting for you aboard. I suppose you can cook it!"

My friends hove to. To-day I was treated less as a stranger, taught how to signal at bad turnings by means of certain tricks in whip-cracking, given a spell at the helm, and taken into confidence by all members of the crew in turn. The day was fresher and brighter than the previous two had been, and the Northamptonshire countryside appeared to great advantage. The red loam, the little hills, the woods, the villages seemed set in their appointed places not of necessity but to please the eye.

It was customary for greetings and sometimes considerable badinage to be exchanged between all hands when we passed boats going in the other direction. Everybody on the Canal knows everybody else, and is acquainted with the uttermost of their private affairs, for they have, most of them, been along this way all their lives and their fathers before them. But they can rarely tell you the name of a village unless the Canal goes through its midst, or a landmark, or where roads lead to. What I have called *badinage* is really astonishingly fine repartee, at which the whole of this community excel. Were it taken down at random dictation (with the suppression of certain adjectives), it would read as brilliant dialogue. I suppose the pithiness of it has been evolved from the habit of having to exchange news and ideas with your friends when, like comets, they

appear but once every so often, and then for a matter of seconds only as they come into and go out of earshot. As to those adjectives which should be suppressed if the Canal repartee were printed, is the bargee noted for a monopoly in this respect? It may have been so at one time. But I have known Utmost Respectability in khaki fall a prey to adjectives and develop seizures as long and as frequent as any waterman I have ever overheard.

By half-past ten we reached Blisworth Tunnel, and tied up behind two other pairs of boats waiting for the hour of eleven, when a steam tug would take us all through together. The tunnel is not far short of two miles, and takes three-quarters of an hour to go through with a tug. Even with this amenity it is something of an ordeal, for the place gets choked with fumes of charcoal from the grates of barges, to say nothing of the rich sulphurous exhalations of the tug, and, in addition, the water drips continually from the roof, and in some places pours down in solid streams. What must it have been like in the days not long past, when the boatmen had to work their own way through! Owing to the low-browed roof, it was not possible to punt or pole the boats. Wooden platforms called "wings" were rigged one on each side of the bows. On each of these a man lay on his back with his head towards his destination, and, sticking out his feet at right angles till they touched the walls, he *walked* the boat through the tunnel.

At eleven o'clock our tug took the six of us

into the tunnel. The younger of the two mates, friend Bob, was on board with me ; Jim was gone over the hill-top with the horse ; and the Captain was on the other boat that followed. It was not long before we had made sufficient smoke to obscure completely the shining entrance, the little peep of landscape behaving like a photograph that has been toned but not fixed. For a time the open hatch of the boat in front showed a cheerful light, but that, through baleful stages, also waned to nothing. Then complete darkness and stifling hot smother greeted the eyes, nose, and sense of touch on deck, while the ears were confused by echoing noises of propeller lash, the dripping of overhead water, and the hard metallic clink of wavelets. In the cabin a candle had been lit, and, though much fume was also present here, the very oppressiveness of it gave a pleasant sense of awe. Bob and I squatted by each other, and fell to talking about ghosts.

I said, "I've heard some of these tunnels are haunted."



No reply.

"Is there a ghost in this one?"

"Not as I've ever heard tell of."

Silence for a while; then Bob said, "I've heard there's one of 'em in the next tunnel at Branston."

"What is it?"

"A woman."

Another silence; then Bob again, "I knowed a man that seed her once. She steps on your boat when you're in the middle o' the tunnel, and takes the 'elm and doesn't say nothing to no one, and when you gets near the daylight she's gone. There's another in a tunnel at the Potteries called Kit Crewe. One of them was murdered by a man in the dark and throwed into the cut, I've heard say."

After that we said nothing more, but listened to the shuffling of the echoes and the cackle of dripping water, while fumes continued to gather in the cabin. There is a grand fascination in a tunnel no less than in a cave. We grown-ups think it a little beneath our dignity to wax enthusiastic about such things. Boys show us the way here. How they revel in subterranean workings! So universal is their taste that one cannot but think that there is more in it than a chance whim; that, when our minds are fresh, ancestral voices speaking from beyond our dawn strike on us; voices from the small hours of the morning of our race, singing of their great deeds, their loves, their woes, and of the mystery of God, in the security of caverns and holes in the rocks.

Yes, in spite of all our parade of up-to-dateness the voice of the caveman is still with us, not only helping us to our fancies and anticipations, but nerving us to the battle of spirit against brute, for he was the first to take the field.

After our three-quarters of an hour of darkness that could be felt we burst once more into the blaze of day, and found the ever-smiling Jim waiting for us with the horse. On we went, sometimes in a cutting, sometimes rounding the swelling breast of a hill, sometimes commanding fair prospects from the height of an embankment. Seldom now were we on the dead level.

Passing Weedon, I left the barge to visit the sad spot where in 1915 the *Irish Mail* was wrecked. For me the *Irish Mail* has always been a great and living hero. Even now the illusion remains. The place is still marked by irregularities in the quick-set hedge at the botton of the embankment. That is all there is, and it seems somehow to lift the mind's imaginings more than a monument. The spirit of the arrested thunderer still hovers over that simple field.

When I turned to go, the barges had gained half a mile on me, and as my bicycle was still on board, it was necessary to consider some expedient for overhauling them. It proved fortunately that their course at this point was particularly devious, and the road went one mile where the Canal went two. I was thus able to head off my transport, and drop down unseen on to the tow-path just as they rounded a bend. I could not help

hoping that this dramatic *coup* would surprise the Captain ; but he merely exclaimed a little sardonically, " Back again ? "

From here we passed into the most beautiful region that the Canal had so far led us to. It was an open woodland, where huge trees stood their distance well from each other, like a council of elders. Now if one were on foot upon the ground I fancy this place would not have looked particularly remarkable. But it was the kind of thing that suited the barge motion to a nicety, exalting the coal-carrier of commerce to an Argo of Jason—that wonderful sensation of gliding, gliding, while the picture before the eye evolves and dissolves, lending to beauty a stateliness such as a dance measure of the old time lends to fair womanhood ! Yes ; but whereas mortals must have music to tread with, Nature is greater when she moves in silence. The low sun dipping towards evening shone among those forest trees, and enriched their green with gold, struck the clouds with shining edges, and cast the image of them on the waterway. For a while no birds sang, the breeze faltered and fell, and the water plantains, the iris, and the rush hushed the small ripples that we roused.

The spell of those things fell on Mr Nile in a way that I did not at first take in. He stood next to me steering the boat. He began to speak of his own accord almost for the first time since we had met. He complained of his boys. For boys they were good—he wasn't saying anything against

them—yes, they were good lads ; but they couldn't, either of them, humour the old horse in the way he was used to. They hardly seemed to know his hoof from his tail. Eating and sleeping, that's where they excelled ! As to keeping things clean and ship-shape, did you ever see them swabbing and dusting without being told ? His boats used not to be the drab craft that they were now. The chimney of the *Alice Anne* that had such a broken look about the top of it—that used to have brass rings on. But they had belonged to his girl who was drowned, and he'd had them taken off. “ Spick and span ! ” he cried. “ Why, there wasn't any boats more spick and span than these. Bad weather or good, you never could find a spot of dust or dirt on them from one end of a trip to the other. And the old 'orse, she understood him like a sister. She was fit to keep company with any one, that girl, and just turned twenty when she was drowned.”

Under the cold exterior he affected, the heart of this man glowed with tenderness, and ached continually with the sorrow of bereavement. I think his loss was always before him. When he hastened to be in time for the tug at the next tunnel some one rallied him on his dispatch, and then asked if he was going to get to his journey's end by the following afternoon. He said he was, but added, “ It's a bad job to start reckoning up. I've never done it since our wench was drowned.”

Up to the next summit we worked the boats, through another long tunnel, and then down the

locks to Branston, I myself being entrusted with that honourable badge of confidence, a sluice key. At Branston at sunset (full early for our tireless captain) we tied up the boats for that night; and the reason of this halt—when another two hours might have been wrested from the day—was never made known. But before we got to Branston two young women came aboard; and the younger of these, a quiet sweet-looking girl, hailed from a boat that had come to the end of her journey north. She was the sweetheart of the ever-smiling Jim. No doubt, with the Captain it was still the lost one who pleaded for the lovers.

Branston, particularly at sundown, might be the end of a sweet dream. No buildings crowded the Canal sides. High up to the right, crowning a sweeping flank of green, stands a church, a wind-mill, and two houses of an old-world look. To the left is a valley, and whatever dwellings are to be seen there look well mellowed by time. Farther along, the slope is covered by a wood that overbrows the Canal. On the left bank are stables and a boatbuilder's yard and, down in a little offing of trees and knolls, an inn, as it was when coaches were the order of the day. Here, in the spacious chimney, on either side a large hearth fire, Mr Nile and I sat down and called for ale. The room presently filled with inland sailors and the repartee whereof I have made mention crackled like burning mistletoe. The hospitable custom of the place was that when any one came in, lest he should be kept an instant waiting for his refresh-

ment, some one handed him a mug from which to take a draught. This was always offered and always accepted. Then when the new-comer's beer arrived, before taking it, he brought it to whoever had been his host, and punctiliously paid off his score. There was a feeling of the loving-cup about this procedure that boded good comradeship. More than once a woman from the barges came in, her fine erect figure dressed in neat black, and wearing her sun-bonnet—the making and wearing of which is still a great feature on the water,—took her ale a little apart from the men and without the customary dole, and went out again. By-and-by a kind of abridged skittle-alley at the far side of the stone-flagged room was put into commission, and a grand din ensued.

Thus all our hearts warmed to the gossip of the waterways, and I went from the midst of the inland voyagers with a feeling that I had had but a glimpse of a wonderful community of simple and true-hearted Englishmen who live in the midst of their fellow-countrymen in a world hardly explored and held wrongfully in disrepute.

A GRAND MEANDER

CYCLE SONG.

THE crimped clouds swim full low
Over the long chalk breast.
The cold wind bodes of snow
As it blows me along to the West.

Bowl over, bowl over Bicycle wheel !
Who feels what I feel ?
I'm no sad winter's guest !
On the road
I'm my best,
Full of zest !
Love's my lode.

Bad weather's no crime
In the mid-winter time,
Though there's mud under tyre
Or it rain or it blow,
Or the water's spell-crossed,
Or come whirligig snow,
Our young blood's at the prime,
There's no sight like the rime,
There's no hush like the frost.

Bowl over, bowl over Bicycle wheel !
There's some life in cold steel
When you're urging amain,
Joints astir,
Frame astrain,
Flowing chain,
Spokes awhirr !



A GRAND MEANDER.

Part of an account of a round of visits, unaccompanied and accompanied, by Crank and by Shank in December 1923.

I.

A FORTNIGHT before Christmas I must needs go North to celebrate that great festival on the far slopes of Arvon. The route I had chosen was by no means direct, for I had a friend to see at Yeovil, and another at Midsummer Norton, and yet another at Bristol. However, I have a paradox, home-made but sensible, which goes, "More speed less travel," by which I mean that if you must go from point to point in a fast-moving vehicle, the mind of the machine masters you. Your destination, not your travelling, is paramount. But if you go slowly, by the power of your own muscles, then is time and travel related, travel is paramount, and it is pleasant and profitable to meander.

Shortly after two o'clock I identified myself with the down-stream of traffic that swept countrywards in the High Street of the Royal Borough of Kensington. London was sullen with un-

certain atmospheric phenomena that were neither fog nor yet cloud. There was mirk above and grease below. A monotony of muffled sounds filled my ears, a monotony of muffled light filled my eyes. I say monotony, and yet there is a kind of long swing and sweep about London traffic that amounts to a rhythm—a rhythm not ordinarily propounded; a surging of life-blood at the heart-centre of England, crude, cyclopean, like primæval dance-drums, but a real rhythm none the less, and no fancy. With feline stealth of tread and pace my bicycle carried me, a corpuscle of impetus without noise in the hubbub of the great artery. My eyes caught a man picking up the wooden pavement. I passed his pick as it descended, and at the same time my front wheel skidded, and lo ! I was no longer a cyclist, but one hanging in the air, and about to meet the street face to face.

Immediately the fall was over the first thing that filled my mind was the thought of the man with the pick. Where was he now ? What was he doing ? Would he not at this very moment be seizing on my spill as a good opportunity to pause in his labours and fill a fresh pipe ? I felt convinced he would. My mind was set on nothing but proving this point. I scrambled up and looked round and saw my friend almost at my elbow, even now putting a light to his replenished bowl. His eye caught mine. “ A narrow shave ! ” said he. I then saw that only by pulling into the pavement had a giant lorry avoided running over me.

I had sustained little damage. But my corduroy breeches were cut across the knee, and the skin of that supple member showed itself abraded; also my chin was bleeding. I therefore repaired to the first chemist that I could find. He was a quiet little man, amply endowed with that easy and well-bred manner of address that raises the chemist on a pedestal above all ordinary shopkeepers. We retired to a back parlour with hot-water cans and antiseptics. His face reminded me of a paint-brush, so I said—

“You sold me a paint-brush once.”

“For the throat?” said he. That supplied the link I wanted between the Arts and the Pharmacy and jogged recollection. I hazarded, “In Plymouth, I suppose, it must have been?” This very uncertain reminiscence had a magical effect on him. He told his story. Once he had been his own master. By the blue waters of South Devon fortune had smiled on him. He had won more and more business, and acquired more and more premises. Then came the end of the German War, when the noise of swords being beaten into pruning-hooks resounded over the countryside. The glitter of this metaphoric process and the promise of a further metaphoric golden husbandry that might fall to the sickle of the pioneers of peace, together with the noise of the brave tramp of the home-coming hordes, filled the saddened corners of men’s minds, and everywhere the cry went up, “Launch out! Launch out! Prosperity is at hand!” My little chemist launched out.

The drug store disappeared, and a complete and almost ludicrous antithesis replaced it in the shape of a large public-house. Behold the life-trained healer of the people now become their would-be fuddler ! Alas for would-be's when pitted against professionals and old hands ! If they are honest men, so much the worse for them. In short, my little friend was broken by his venture, and had to leave the blue sea and the fresh air and serve in the fogs of London as an underling in his old trade.

The exit from the metropolis through Hounslow is dreary and uninspiring. It was not until after dark that I got into the country. My immediate objective was Basingstoke, but, owing to a deficiency of one map, I could not direct myself unaided until I got there. What little wind there was was contrary ; a ground mist hovered over the road. The moon was only four days old. Walking a hill under the vague gloom of some large trees, I encountered another cyclist joining the road at right angles, of whom I asked ways and distances. His method was to give quotations of the latter, not in terms of mileage but of time. Nor was he very accurate in this respect, for he prophesied we should reach Bagshot at six o'clock, and when we rode into that town at six twenty-five, he turned to me and said, " Didn't I tell you we'd be here about six ? "

He was a farrier-smith, a man full of prejudices, and at the same time of sound common-sense. He gave his views as we went along on an innumerable number of subjects, one after the other, and

at the end of every such delivery he would cry out in the darkness, "What do you think of that?" But I soon found that whatever I thought about it, it made no manner of difference to him, for while I was giving him my opinion he was much too deeply absorbed in the preparation of his next speech to pay any attention to what I said. He described his joining the army as "Then I went to war." We parted at Bagshot.

After a while I came out on to what must have been a wide common or open space. It was quite dark, but looking round I could see far off the roving beams of motor head-lamps on distant roads, the haze making them look phosphorescent and unearthly.

About eight o'clock I came down a steep hill. At the bottom, on my right, stood a substantial inn. I could distinguish very little of the building, and it was very indifferently lit. With thoughts of supper in my mind, I dismounted. There seemed, even in the obscurity, to be a certain pleasurable distinctiveness about the place. And though I could not say which, if any, of the five senses gave me this evidence, I took a fancy to the unseen locality where I found myself, and, contrary to my own expectations, determined to stay the night here. Accordingly I strolled into the small lobby, and, encountering mine hostess, asked for supper and a bed. She showed me at once into what she modestly called the "Coffee-room," and turned the lights up. "Coffee-room, indeed!" thought I as I stared in amazement

at this magnificent apartment. In height, in breadth, in length, it was enormous. But although no one was within it did not look too large to offer welcome to a solitary traveller, for its proportions were as fine as its size. It was built in the Georgian style, with classical pilasters and cornice. The hangings that masked the tall windows were rich but in good taste, their runners housed in massive oak canopies. The ceiling was crossed to squares by large oak beams, in whose mouldings was reflected the same stately restraint that characterised the whole chamber. But the real genius of the room was a chandelier, whose aërial cascade shimmered in the midst. Nor was it merely the sparkle flashing from it as from frost-bright stars that fastened my attention, but the curvature, the modest masterly restraint of the curvature, exquisitely correcting the severity of the classic lines, an object that in a more primitive language would undoubtedly have been accorded the feminine gender.

There are times when one feels that all the trouble to which architects and artists put themselves to enhance the drab things of life are not in vain, that the inspiration of those whose candle is snuffed out reacts with undiminished vitality on one's own perceptive powers, and not merely tickles the appreciative sense but gives the full-organ swell of pleasure. Who will not commend such men as high priests of the spiritual conception of life when they make the abstract to stand and deliver in this fashion! My meal

was no bathos either. Long may it live in my recollection !

After supper the landlord waited on me, and I demanded of him a reason for the existence of his coffee-room. He told me it was built by George IV. as a resting-place on his frequent journeys to Weymouth.

“And the chandelier ?” said I. “I feel convinced that that was part and parcel of the designer’s conception of the room.”

“Oh yes, it was,” said mine host, “and I’ve had many offers from Americans for it, but I won’t part with it. Every one of those drops is crystal and not glass ; I’ve had them tested. It was struck by lightning years ago. But it didn’t do no more damage than to knock off two of the candle-arms ; then it leaped across the floor and tore the front of the fire-grate out.”

Dawn broke in a red welter. The sky was without cloud or wind, the earth without haze. A spell of frost had fallen overnight, and the trees sparkled in a way that emphasised the hush and the redness. Soon the light of the newly risen sun welled into the Royal dining-room, and struck fire in the great chandelier. Almost one could fancy that the lightning which had played in its crystal galaxy had left it a peculiar residual heritage in red and violet flashes. So, in the best vein for taking the road, I left the White Lion of Hartford Bridge.

The household of my late hospice had made an excellent job of my torn breeches knee. (Restored

respectability is in itself a form of refreshment.) I urged my bicycle through the keen air, and wished the day might never grow old. It was a land of splendid timber-trees whose leaves were not all fallen yet. From the midst of a moss-grown crotchery wall, broken to a gap under the russet umbrage of one of such trees, some school-going children burst helter-skelter. A child with a red cloth tam-o'-shanter, a child with large grey-blue eyes, another with tossing goldilocks; and every one blazing with health and the alarm of being late. That was all I saw of them, but they struck me somehow as a little casual melody will sometimes do and leave one wondering on the verge of tears. I said, "Good-morning, children"; and they, hard-breathed, gave back a sweet "Good-morning, sir." God bless the schoolmaster that still teaches good manners!

Nine miles and then Basingstoke, with its Thorneycroftian colony of motor-makers. Many of these cars, stripped to the chassis, were on the roads trying their mechanical prowess for the first time. Without their bodies they wore an air of superb dignity, if not beauty, peculiar to mechanical organisms that have achieved a certain stage in their economic evolution.

One of the great features of the near west country—that is, so much of it as can be called or thought "west" this side of the Devonian border—is the breweries. And of the brews they turn out, quite the most remarkable, both in quality and variety, is their draught stout. Stout is a beverage that took

me years to acquire a taste for, and now that I have accomplished this epicurean feat, I flatter myself that I have some discrimination. I like to take my stout in a sentimental setting. With the idea that already I might taste the first fruits of the west, I got off at Andover. But I could not see any premises there sufficiently romantic for the discussion of the black ambrosia, so I bought some sandwiches off a man in a wooden hut and continued my progress.

I ate my sandwiches at a commendable little inn at Thruxton, but alas! they had no west-country stout. Nevertheless, I spent a pleasing luncheon hour, for the feminine genius of the place instructed me in the skill of the game called Shove-Halfpenny. Shortly before two o'clock I moved off. The fair weather had entirely disappeared; a fine misty rain was blowing dismally from the west. At any other time I might have regretted this atmospheric caprice, but under the circumstances I felt greatly beholden to it. For I was about to see Stonehenge for the first time. So many treatises have I read, so many models and pictures have I seen of this great British sphinx, that I felt predoomed to disappointment, but I knew that in mist I should, at any rate, see it at its best. The road now began to lead over undulating downs, where the present age played but little part, and tumulus after tumulus loomed out as though to prepare the mind for that ruin of a greater and more ancient and more mysterious people. Wild were those downs under

that sad wet wind of the west, and sorrowfully under its barely lifted veil of teeming grey appeared that deserted nursery of heroes in the valley of Bulford. Through Amesbury, with dripping mud-guards and dejected flapping poncho, we passed, and then at last, dimly seen, in spite of all fore-warnings strangely unexpected, the great temple of the Stone Age men. I had made up my mind not to be shocked by the inevitable toll-gate, and had so prepared my sixpence as to be able to fling it down and rush through the barrier as if the thing existed not. All this I arranged, but the gate did not yield, and a crabbed voice said, "Stop!"

"Why should I stop?" said I, my eye still fixed upon the stones.

"Wet paint!" said the voice, and laughed maliciously.

"All right," said I as politely as might be. The stile swung to my pressure.

"Wait a bit," said the voice.

"What now?"

"Your ticket!"

And yet when I stood within the hallowed precinct these things were forgotten, for Stonehenge is Stonehenge, and nothing I had ever seen or read about it was comparable to IT. As I looked at those venerable stones, while the mist curtains swept about them and the wind sighed and set the winter grass foolishly ruffling at their bases, I could think no coherent thought except that vision I had had in the morning—old walls,

fallen leaves, and then in a flash a red tam-o'-shanter, clear eyes, and tossing goldilocks, children breathless with haste, bright as the keen morning, and ruddy with the same vital stream that warmed the hearts of these old worshippers.

That evening, when I stood in the great cathedral at Salisbury and heard the last Amen of the choir float abroad and lose itself in tuneful dissipation, I thought again of Stonehenge and of the children, and I said to myself, "And still we doubt, and still we worship."

Now of Salisbury city, of its grandeur, of its quaint beauty, of its people—in fact all that therein is, have they not been chronicled in paint and ink till there is nothing left to speak of?—except perhaps the boots of the Chough Inn, who is a good fellow, quite out of the common, and cleaned my bicycle without expecting a tip.

With the dawn I sallied forth, and lo! the mist of yesternight still prevailed—nay, was in greater concentration, for there was no longer any wind. It caused me now as much annoyance as it had previously given me pleasure, for the feature I had looked forward to seeing on my morning ride was a fine escarpment that my map told me overhung a pleasant pasture-land for some miles along the left of the road by which I was bound. A very cold mist it was, for Jack Frost had been busy again. Mile after mile we trundled, and there was no sign of a dispersion, but by the brightness of the light I guessed that if the road had been but a little higher up we should have been going

under a serene sunlit sky. This proved true, for, as we rose through the upper depth of the valley, the mist melted by stages, and the bold headland of White Sheet Hill and its suggestive neighbour, Gallows Hill, stood up from a luminous white smother, growing on the vision like a dream-land coast of wan high-lights and uncertain glories.

Not far from here I passed a little cottage, by the door of which a board revealed that its master was a bootmaker. Now it chanced that one of my boots required a small repair, so I dismounted, and applied my knuckles to the door. A "very respectable" woman in a print dress opened to me and bade me enter, and I found myself in a kitchen. On my right sat the cobbler plying his trade. He said he would do my boot at once, so I proceeded to remove it. Spying a tattoo-mark on his right wrist, I said—

"By the marks on your wrist you seem to have been a sailor."

"You guess right," said he. "Them marks was all the go when I was in the service."

"Are you pensioned?" said I.

"No," said he.

"It's hard on him," said the woman, "putting in his best years in the Navy and then having to work sun and candle-light all his days to get a bare living."

"Invalided out, you see, just before I'd put in my time for a pension. Egypt, that's what done for me," said the man, as if fearful that his wife

in airing his grievance should say anything disrespectful of his king and country.

"They don't treat 'em fair in the Navy, that's what I say," said the woman, and snatched up a newspaper, over which she pored with a defiant scowl.

"Did you serve in the wooden ships?" said I.

"Yes," said he; "when I was a lad. The old *Myrmidon*, she was my first ship."

"Did these ships have auxiliary steam-engines, or were they all sail?"

"The *Myrmidon* had engines. You wasn't allowed to steam at sea, of course. You just used your steam coming in and out of harbour. But I was on some ships all sail, some of the smaller craft, brigs of war and that class, before I was in ironclads."

"Did you do any chasing of slavers?"

"No. I wasn't with them as chased the dhows, though I know plenty as did, of course. And sometimes they made a good thing out of it, for when they fell in with a loaded boat they got prize-money, so much per head for the slaves they liberated. But I seen active service at Alexandria in '82—Egypt, that's what done for me——"

"Look at the time, John!" said his wife; and to me, "He *will* talk, sir, you know. He *will* run on!"

And so he did, good fellow, in spite of wifely punctuations, and turned my boot out well in the end. By now the mist had totally gone, and the landscape smiled under an azure heaven.

Small hills, in part wooded, in part smooth and rolling, of the kind known in the north-west midlands as "tumps," cheered the eye with their heave and fall. It might have been romantic but for certain indications of a whirligig age.

The road, metalled as it used to be till very recent years, was often a beautiful addition to the landscape, both through its colour and by virtue of the way it wound along. And if the grass margins were broad and offered a generous hospitality for the poor man's cow, it was fairer still. But now all must be "good surface." The grass margins are hacked back to the very hedge-roots like nails cut to the quick, and horrid stinking engines spill tar indiscriminately over highway and byway, till the English countryside that was so fair is netted with dismal motor-tracks. This is not all, for a new craze has set in for banishing detachment, and for keeping one in continual touch with the town feeling—sign-posts must now have their route numbers. No longer have we time to read such tedious jargon as place-names and make guesswork of our route. Our new educational system teaches us that "Time is money" and "Money maketh man"; we must not therefore dally with unprofitable rusticity. To this end the sign-posts must be made fool-proof, and nothing left to the imagination. "Safety first!" croaks the yellow label on each place through which we whirl. But while I am forced, against my will, to keep myself informed that I travel along A.30 of the new dispensation, I can still enjoy the fond

mysticism of the old milestones that for Salisbury say Sarum and for Shaftesbury Shaston.

Into this last place I now rode, passing on my left almost, if not quite, the ugliest building I have ever seen. The strains of some would-not-be pianist practising on a jaded instrument struck harshly out of one of the windows as though the genius of the place were speaking with its own voice. The town of Shaftesbury itself gives a very different impression. It is one of those places that has a *tone*—a mellow tone, a tone of modes and manners and edifices historically derived. Many are the places in England that might answer to this description, but are they not usually hemmed among hills or built upon the fenny plain, and owe their *tone* to that enervating anodyne, relaxing air? But Shaftesbury has its seat upon a high outpost of the hills; there is nothing Bœotian about it. Its air is brisk, and, if environment counts for anything, the distant views that it commands must be a source of continual inspiration to its townsfolk.

Being the hour of refection, I purchased some cakes at a pastry-cook's shop, and sought for a house of public entertainment suitable to my lowly quality as a cyclist. At last, after an inspection of exteriors, I entered the Crown and Anchor. Mine host himself waved me into the bar-parlour with such a gracious motion of welcome that I felt at home immediately. Two men sat there—one of a grave plantagenet look, with puttees and spindle-shanks, and out at elbows; the other a

more solid fellow, no better dressed, but with a squarish jowl and keen, earnest, grey eyes that reflected a sort of inner light which, in an educated man, might have stamped him as one of intellectual tastes. The latter was the owner of a scraggy nondescript little bitch that, with a despatch amounting to effrontery, applied to me for a share in my provender.

That good west-country stout whereof I have made mention was on tap here. Accordingly my heart was enlarged, and I fed my little canine beggar in spite of the counter-commands of her lord and master.

“Is she good with rats?” said I.

“Rats!” said the broad-faced man. “I don’t think she’d have much to say to rats.”

On this the landlord stepped out of his little glass conning-tower where he commanded his beer-engines.

“You mustn’t talk to him about rats,” said he. “He is the king of rabbit-catchers!”

The broad-faced man smiled as though he by no means resented this style and title, nor considered it in any way an exaggeration.

“Really?” said I. “I’ve shot rabbits ever since I could hold a gun, but I don’t know much about trapping them. What method do you favour?”

“Wire snares,” said he.

“How do you set your snares?” said I.

“Ah!” said the landlord. “Now you’re asking something!”

“You need not be afraid of me,” said I. “I don’t belong hereabouts.”

“Well,” said the king of rabbit-catchers, “it isn’t that I’m afraid of telling what’s to do with snaring. There’s no mystery in it. But, you see, talking about these things to folks you don’t know is a funny job sometimes.”

“Oh, but he’s an artist at it!” said the landlord with magnificent tact.

“Ay, a proper ’un at the game he is,” muttered the third man.

Said the king, “I can see by your cap you’re a sporting gentleman yourself”—there were some old-time trout-flies sticking in it. “And it isn’t, as I say, as I’d hide what I know about snaring. But there’s some as takes it funny whatever you tells ’em. The snaring is nothing. Anybody can set the snare. It’s *rabbits*. That’s what takes some knowing.”

“You have a running wire noose anchored to a peg, don’t you?” said I.

“You have it anchored to a peg, and you set the noose in the snick of a stick by a rabbit’s jump.”

“Do you mean its run?” I asked.

“No, not its run, its jump. Rabbits don’t run except you frighten them. It isn’t natural for them to run; they jump.”

“What! Do you mean that they always jump from the same spot?”

“They always jump from the same spot, and they always light on the same spot. And if you were to go just after an early frost and look close

on the ground you'd see that, because the grass-tips, where they puts their four legs all together each time they lollops, goes black. Yes ; that's where a bit of cunning and a bit of knowledge comes in. You've got to look for the jumps and study 'em. You've got to guess by that the size and the weight of your rabbit, and just where his head'll come a-flying through the air. And that's how you'll know where to put the snare."

"Ah ! it sounds easy, don't it ? " said the landlord.

"Easy as spit till you try !" grunted Plantagenet.

"Rabbits ! That's all where it comes in," admitted the king.

"You don't use spring-traps, then ? " said I.

"No. I never touch 'em. They're clumsy and they're cruel."

This last admission on the part of the rabbit-catcher made a far more favourable impression on me than the enthusiastic recommendations of the other two men. Here indeed was the hunter whom nature herself would own as one to whom she might reveal her secrets. A good sportsman, as devoted to the creatures, I dare say, as any true naturalist of the old school. In my mind I compared him with the rabbit-catcher of Anglesey, who, in his calling, is better known to me than any other type : a hairy-faced Celt of the meanest sort, as cunning as you please, but a man of no skill, to whom the sufferings of a rabbit that lies

torn and bleeding in his trap excites nothing but satisfaction in the lust of capture.

We passed on to anecdote. "Oh yes," said the king. "There's rum 'uns among rabbits as there is among men. Well, there was one—Old Toby I used to call him; I'd never seen him, mind you, but I knew a lot about him. He was as strong as a lion. You couldn't get him out with a ferret. Yet he didn't have a big underground run. A poor little place he lived in—you wouldn't credit it. But he relied on his strength. When you put a ferret in, you could hear him slapping his heels on the floor of his tunnel like thunder. It's my belief he went for 'em without waiting for any how-do-you-do's. They used to come out smarter than ever they went in. And you couldn't get him in a snare. It wouldn't hold him. He'd pull it off for you. Oh, he was a proper gentleman was old Toby! Well, I left him alone for a bit, and then some one happened to give me a great big ugly polecat ferret. You never saw such a brute. You couldn't keep a muzzle on her to save your life, and she wouldn't work on the line. She was a fair corker! I shook my head many a time over this old polecat bitch. At last I says to her, 'You shall try your luck with Toby, old girl. If he does nothing else, he'll teach you a lesson.' So I pops her in without no muzzle nor nothing; and then presently thumpety-thump under the ground! But that didn't last long. Silence! Not a sound! I tell you it was a poor place where Toby lived. It looked as if he was too

proud with his strength to bother about making tunnels. I knew very well there was only one other hole besides the one I put the ferret in at. So I pops a net over the one where she'd gone in, in case of accidents, and looks down the other. Well, it was all quiet inside, and I began to think we'd have to get the spade, when I sees something white coming up in the dark. And sure enough that was old Toby's tail. The polecat was fast in his nose, and he was drawing her up to daylight backwards way. Well, that was the end of poor old Toby. Five and a half pounds he weighed, and he had nine snares round his neck, mortified in the flesh."

"Can you beat that ? " said the landlord.

"All gospel," growled Plantagenet, "for I seen that rabbit on the weigh-hook, and I seen the nine snares fast round 'un."

Away down the hill and on to Sherborne, and there much confabulation with the verger of the abbey, who has a strange proclivity for finding things in the roof of his church. On one occasion he found there the complete machinery of a large church clock, and on another occasion, in the same fertile field, a collection of ancient stained-glass, portions of which, he assured me, were unique. Away again. And now west along the rolling road from Sherborne I pressed my pedals, and kept the spoke-wires humming. It was sunset-time when I came to Babylon Hill, on the Somerset border, dipped into the shadow of a cutting, ran out and round a sweeping curve, and saw

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SHERBORNE ABBEY FROM THE SCHOOL COURTS.

Yeovil lie below me hazy-blue under a long golden-breasted cloud.

My associations for the last two days had been wholly rustic; the contrast, therefore, was not without its best values when I found myself climbing an outside staircase to the upper storey of a building in the middle of an aeroplane factory. I paused at a landing and looked out into the darkness over a spread of glass roofs blazing with the torch of industry. The drone of electric generation and the dull persistent trip of reciprocator engines gave to this brilliant chiaro-oscuro a certain powerful interpretation that spoke to the eyes and ears in a medium all its own. Mechanical rhythms are too often confounded with music just as the lilt of poetry is. For this reason their peculiar power of endowing the commonplace with dignity and of clothing even the majestic elements themselves with a higher majesty is overlooked. It is the rhythm of the eight-wheel coach tripping the rail-joints that gives the sense of peculiar glory to the trains on the London and North-Western Railway. It is the rhythm of the triple expansion engine in the steamer that makes a vessel so equipped infinitely more interesting to travel on than one fitted with turbines. And so now the brilliance of the works, the massive gloom of night, appeared as one coherent artistic phrase when observed by the utterance of this native rhythm. And thus my friend found me, and I could not but think that her own charm was never seen to more advantage than when she

stepped from the lighted doorway and, with feminine usurpation, displaced my night and light and rhythm from a picture to a setting.

I left Yeovil at nine o'clock with no very certain idea as to where I was going to spend the night. I had at this point altered my course from south-west to north, and for the first time since I left London had the wind in my favour, or at any rate, as the sailors would say, on my port-quarter. In addition to this, the road was drier than I had hitherto found it. Also it was all either downhill or level, and lastly, it was of Roman origin, and therefore straight. These things in the moonlight combined to favour the one circumstance under which I consider that the crank is superior to the shank. Traversing mysterious Sedgemoor in the moonlight like a swift ghost while one's own feet force the pace seemed to me a high form of enjoyment. I would that it might have gone on and on. But considerations of a night's lodging, in conjunction with landlords' bed-times, compelled me to stop at Ilchester.

"Have you got a room?" said I to the landlady of an inn in this place, who looked none too pleased to see me.

"As it happens," said she, "I have."

"How does it happen?" said I.

"Why, the other party that were coming haven't come, that's all," said she. Accordingly I was shown up to the room, where I duly deposited my rucksack, and wished I might be still

outside pedalling for dear life over Sedgemoor in the moonlight. There was no private room to go to, so I went to the bar-parlour and ordered stout and biscuits. I had not well begun before a heavily built man, followed by a callow and meagre naval seaman, with *Victory* on his hat, followed by a forlorn-looking youth dressed in stiff black reach-me-downs, came in. They sat down, the heavy man striding his chair, back to front, and confronting the others, while the landlady, who had followed, stood in the door. He was conversing with her as he entered, and was still doing so. It seemed that he was pleading with her for a bed for the other two. They had come all the way from Portsmouth, as I understood, in order "to bury their grandmother." They could not find a bed in the village anywhere else.

"Well now," thought I, "I can do a good piece of business over this. I am not tied to this place by obligations of ancestral obsequies as these men are. On the contrary, I feel that it would be much more agreeable to be out in the moonlight pedalling for dear life over Sedgemoor. Again, how sweet to the ears of the good-turner are the soft words of thanks of the good-turnees! In other words, it was one of those happy occasions when philanthropy and convenience run abreast. So I went and told the landlady that as these lads were in such sorry case, while I had a bicycle and could the more easily make shift, I would give up my bed to them.

“You can go if you like,” said the landlady, and by her tone and eye I saw at once that the worst construction had been put upon my charitable inclinations. However, I went. With ignominy my bag was held out to me to take away, and as outside I buckled it to my carrier, the heavy man and the bereaved grandsons came out of the inn, and passed by me close to with bursts of derisive merriment. I could almost hear them say, “There’s that fool that gave up a good bed when he’d got one !” I have always profoundly distrusted the theory that charity should begin at home.

Turned loose on the night again, I made for Somerton, the ancient capital of Somerset. I had a strange wild adventure with a timid man and a restive horse that sorted well with the moonlight and the moor, and reached Somerton shortly after ten o’clock, where at the sign of the Black Lion I encountered a landlord who was an excellent fellow, and took me in without demur, providing me moreover with a comfortable and well-aired bed.

And now on the last day of my cycling I had tied myself down to appointments, a miserable business, as the country through which I was to pass was in the highest degree interesting. However, I determined that I must shut my eyes to this, and turn from a traveller to a vehicalist. By eleven o’clock I had to be in Wells Cathedral. By three o’clock I had to be standing on the arrival platform of Temple Meads Station in Bristol. Still, come what might, I had determined to have a look at Somerton before I rushed off

headlong to my fatal appointments. My landlord's son, a bright-eyed intelligent boy, curly-haired, and dressed in corduroy breeks, volunteered to guide me wherever I would go. He took me to the school, and showed me an ancient gun that had been found two days before on Sedgemoor. He opined that it was a relic of the battle. We went to the White Hart Inn, where there is a curious little tower, in which, it is confidently affirmed, King John of France, who was made prisoner by the Black Prince, was shut up. But mine host of the White Hart was not stirring yet, so I had to be content with a glimpse at the exterior and the tiny window that gave into the very cell where the royal captive had been. The White Hart itself was a splendid wooden animal, with a name painted on his neck that gave him an individual air.

And now young Felix must take me to see a man who had found a cellar under a cellar.

"Yes," said the man when he took us down to see this marvel. "We found it quite by accident a couple of years back, and only one man's been in it, and nobody knows what it is." On this he heaved up a flag-stone, and a black gulf was seen to yawn beneath us. In the upper part of his house he had remarkable things also. Beautiful "perpendicular" fireplaces graced two of his rooms. Jacobean woodwork there was as well, and there was a turret stair more ancient still, that rose from the cellar with stone treads, dissolved into wood on the ground floor, and from

here to the first floor strayed a little from the true corkscrew way. However, from the first floor up again the steps were stone, once more conforming to the original twist, and hanging vertically over those of the cellar. The whole was, in fact, a well stair with the middle missing.

And now for "more speed less travel." Passing a charming old-world village called Compton, I was forced to walk a hill, and found myself in company with a venerable carpenter, who was pushing his bicycle up the steep ascent. He told me that the hill was called Marshall's Hill, and thought that the name was derived from a soldier at the time of the battle of Sedgemoor. "For," said he, "the place is full of memories of that old war. There's always things turning up—skulls and bones of men, and bits of this and that." From this rise one can see the old fenland stretching out towards Bridgewater and Taunton. It has a sombre look, as if indeed, as the carpenter said, it was full of memories. Terrible are all memories of war—the mire, the blood, the carrion, the heart-break—but Sedgemoor was a tragedy among tragedies, a nightmare in our history that has no gleam of any ruth to light it. Think of the actors. There is a portrait in the Buccleuch collection of miniatures that shows you Lucy Waters, a large-eyed lovely girl; sub rosa, bride of Charles II., afterwards to be disowned as his queen, tradition tells a pitiful tale of how she died of grief in her father's lonely tower in the wilds of Pembroke. Her son, the Duke of Mon-

mouth, who took the field in vindication of his mother's royal right and lost the day, was allowed, before his execution, an audience of the king. In answer to his plea for life, James taunted his victim with the foolishness of trying to capture the throne of England with men armed with scythes and flails. Could the king have dipped a little into the future, but a year or two, he would have seen himself a fugitive on a battlefield ; and yet a little more prevision would have shown him his grandson fighting also with scythes and flails, and flying for his life from the disaster of Culloden. The axe for Monmouth, but Jeffreys and his "Lambs" and the Bloody Assizes for his brave followers. And for Jeffreys in the end, the Tower of London.

Very different and more pleasant were the memories stirred by the Tor of Glastonbury, crowning in the hazy sunlight the ancient Isle of Avalon, beloved of Arthur. But no time, no time ! In Glastonbury sixty seconds only to dash to the ruins, pay sixpence, receive change for a pound, and see the Holy Thorn in bud. At eleven, in the very middle of that hour so eloquently told by the cathedral clock of Wells, behold me at my first appointment. And now, friend Glazebrook, where art thou ? Clearly thou art elsewhere.

All the rare moments I dare spend at the cathedral, and then over the Mendip Hills, hot-foot, to Midsummer Norton ! And now there is an hour and a half in which to go fourteen miles to Bristol (and they tell me it is a hilly road), and there

must be time for a stirrup-cup of good draught stout and a hunch of Cheddar cheese.

Now it is all accomplished, and even as the large hand of the clock at Temple Meads points the very nick of the hour of three, I am on the arrival platform. The train comes in. And you, friend Kay, where art you ? Clearly you also are elsewhere !

II.

Time having now lost all immediate value for me, I slid comfortably down to the General Post-Office, and there received a conflicting correspondence from Kay that was concluded by a telegram cancelling all previous arrangements, and saying authoritatively that he would arrive in Bristol by the 8.47.

Except that we were going to travel in company on foot, either obliquely or directly towards the objective I was aiming for, Kay and I had no plan. To walk and talk together was our chief idea. In favourable superlatives I would hail Kay the most natural, the most masculine, the most sane, the most enthusiastic man. The new wine of his enthusiasm is as potent as any that Bacchus ever blessed. Many a stately old bottle has it burst ! But he is a preposterous arriver. You can make arrangements as long-standing as you like, and hold him to them by subtle confirmatory correspondence, but he will wire you a procrastination in the end.

The 8.47 came in, and with it Kay, his boots shod with gleaming spikes, his rucksack already braced to his back, and a peach-coloured scarf, purloined at the last minute from his wife, completing the exuberance of his appearance. He sprang from the train, and, instantly singling me out, he made a rush, and, seizing me by the lapels of my coat, cried out in a loud voice, "He's come! He's come!" glaring at me with a terrific ferocity of good-humour. We set off at a whirlwind pace for our hotel.

The next day, leaving my bicycle to follow by rail, Kay and I set forth on foot. We did not make an early start. It had taken us nearly all morning to make a plan. The upshot of our deliberations was that we were to proceed obliquely in my direction and directly in Kay's. The first thing to do was to cross the broad and watery border, but the idea of the tunnel we rightly spurned as a very tame beginning to our adventure. Over the Severn sea we must certainly take shipping, and if we could not find any near at hand, we must walk down the coast till we could if we had to double the Land's End and then go from Falmouth to Ireland and back to Cardiff. Time and tide wait for folks with ideas as big as that.

Anyhow, to begin with we tried out the port of Bristol. But this being the Sabbath there was nothing sailing for the coast of Wales till Monday. So we set off for the Clifton Bridge and the road that leads to Avonmouth and Portishead. Kay

was unused to travelling by the simple means of plantigrade progression. The novelty of it fascinated him so that he could walk no farther, and must needs sit down and inveigh against mankind in that they were not all at this moment upon a walking tour. Why are we all such cogs to grind and be ground and transmit movement from one part of a futile mechanism to another ? Why don't we all cast care and convention to the winds and go a-walking, filling the valleys with the noise of our happy footfalls and crowning the hills with our laughter ? And so on, and so on. Indeed, there was no answer to any of Kay's questions, so I asked him in the end why it was that we, the free ones, continued to sit at the foot of a pine-tree by the roadside instead of seizing the brave opportunity and walking towards our destination. Kay in his turn not being able to find an answer to this question, we moved off.

Coming at last to where the ways divided, one road leading to Portishead and the other to Avonmouth, a decision became necessary. The former of these places was quite a considerable port, although insignificant in comparison with Avonmouth. But since we intended getting a lift across the channel on small craft, Avonmouth was the obvious place. For that very reason we elected to make for Portishead. Thus we dropped from the high ground to the plain. Portishead, with its masts and chimneys, the grey waters of the Severn sea and the Welsh coast beyond, lay before us over a flat, green, pastoral tract. The

idea of crossing that water to the Celtic shores by moonlight already began to stimulate our imaginations. Evening was setting in, and still we were a mile or more from Portishead. The rumble of a bus was heard coming in our direction.

"Let's get in that bus," said Kay. Instantly he divined in my answering glance the obduracy of the walking crank. "Just to show we've got no pride," said he, touching my hand persuasively. We got into the bus. Owing to the noise and some confusion in the talk, the conductor gave us tickets to "the terminus" without explaining that the terminus was not Portishead but beyond it, and by this means we were inadvertently carried almost as far the other side of our goal as we had been on this side of it. "Never mind," said Kay; "it's all good fun." It was dark when we got to the railway station. We asked a young woman who was moving in the same direction how we could get down to the docks. "Well," said she, "I'm going by the pierhead myself, but I'm walking on the line, and you're not supposed to go along the line." However, by that forbidden route we went. The docks themselves seemed rather exclusive places. But we put on a good face, as if we really had business there, and so braved it out with the watchmen that we discovered what the movements of the few likely vessels that were there might be, and eventually became assured of the dismal fact that nothing was likely to sail for Wales that night.

Having broken our road-pride with the bus, what more natural than that we should retrace part of our route by train, even to the Avon ferry, traverse that stream, and walk the two odd miles to Avonmouth? For myself, I felt something of a fallen angel as I stepped into a snug Great Western compartment, but Kay had no such scruples. We got to Avonmouth about eight o'clock, and immediately repaired to the docks. A policeman and a dock-board man were on guard at the entrance. They treated us very civilly, and we deposited our rucksacks at their shelter. Then we went through the gates, and proceeded to make inquiries from the watchmen. The first one had not much to say, and he referred us to his mate in another quarter. Along the great vacant quays of massive masonry we walked, under the shadow of huge warehouses, and over bridges that topped lock-gates. Not a soul was to be seen. A large vessel called *American Press* was tied up alongside one wall. Through her skin we could hear the measured heave and whine of boiler-pumps. At last we came to the hut of the other watchman. He was not very communicative at first. He was of the pious sort. That we should be venturing forth to the coast of Wales on the night of the Sabbath seemed rather to shock him. But we learned from him that the thing to do was to scrape acquaintance with the skipper of a coal-barge or the master of a tug that would be going out on the tide shortly after midnight. We settled, therefore, that we would go back into

the town, get a meal, and return to the docks at midnight. By now it seemed that our friend had relented towards us, for he walked a fair step with us along the quays, explaining how we ought to melt the hearts of those who, in defiance of certain rules and regulations, might be induced to take us over to Wales. A great vessel, brightly lit, lay on the far side of one of the basins. I happened to ask the watchman the name of her. "She's the *Mount Elvira*," said he.

I have done a good deal of hanging about in docks and ports, but I had never been treated in quite such a frank and unofficial way before by the guardians of such places. There was something about the kindness of these Avonmouth dockmen that surpassed mere common courtesy; there seemed to us a definite attitude of quiet but enthusiastic solicitude, a feeling of sympathy on top, though tendered with reserve, as in the war days of French comradeship. Certain remarks dropped came back to us, and I arrived at the just conclusion that we were taken for a respectable class of man but unemployed, and that it was supposed that we were trying to get over to the industrial centre of Wales to find work. Our appearances certainly favoured this hypothesis.

There was a good thorough-going restaurant near the dock-gates that had a real smack of the sea about it, both in the solidity of its fare, the type of its guests, and the quality of civil but not servile good-humour of its landlord. He looked

indeed as if he would be equally at home footing it to the delicate warble of the hornpipe, or dusting his knuckles in a rough-house ashore or afloat. This café kept open till an indefinite time, so that it suited us well. The centre of the room was occupied by a square table, round which some sailors, evidently from the *American Press*, were sitting. Like their straight-stemmed, wall-sided vessel, they conveyed a strong transatlantic impression, as also did the music of their voices. There were present, besides, other nondescript mariners and two lean-visaged denizens of the stokehold world, who affected neckcloths. The place was rather hot. We had our meal, ran out of conversation, and listened dully to the Americans, whose voices, not unlike circular-saws, cut steadily away at solid baulks of mediocre conversation. Finally, we picked up fragments of weekend horror-mongering newspapers to look at; but they had very little variety, being, one and all, occupied with accounts of a man who had murdered his wife and had eluded capture.

"He's not unlike you to look at," said Kay, with his customary disregard for other folk's feelings.

"Well," said I, a little acidly, "if you can't think of anything better than that to say, we'd better go off and look for our ship."

We therefore paid our reckoning and sallied forth. At the dock-gates we picked up our rucksacks. A man in plain clothes who sat on the edge of a table looked hard at me, and said—

"Didn't I see you yesterday afternoon at the docks in Bristol?"

"I dare say you did," said I.

"And now you are going to try and bum a passage over to Wales?"

"Here to-day and gone to-morrow is a motto that I thrive on," said I.

"That man regarded you with *suspicion*," said Kay as we went off. "He thought you were X——"

Somehow one's *amour propre* is always a little ruffled at the mere idea of being mistaken for another identity, whether he be criminal or irreproachable citizen. So I said to Kay—

"If anybody is run in on this trip it will be you, with your peach-coloured scarf, your hat that would disgrace a poacher, and your medibellum riding-bags."

"My scarf is a very good colour. What's the matter with my bags?" said Kay sharply.

We now sought out the pious watchman of the remoter hut. But he had gone off duty, and we discovered his successor gathering firewood off one of the entrance piers, where the *American Press* on her recent arrival had made a slight *faux pas*, with the result that the staging had buckled under the persuasion of that straight and self-assertive stem, and the wood had splintered not a little. This man was of a totally different stamp from his predecessor. He was an old man-of-war's man, and, like my late friend the cobbler, had served first in wooden ships—knew, in fact, the old *Myrmidon* whereof the cobbler had spoken. But

he wore his years with wonderful grace. To look at he was as smart and active as if he had not come to his prime. His hair was crisp and curly. His profile was such that a nobleman might envy it for an unmistakable look of "breed." His eyes were deep blue, pleasant to look at, but of the kind of blue from which bolts fall at short notice. He was a type of man that goes through the world misunderstood to the end, a scourge of the Lord to himself and his companions. And yet how lovable !

"Did you see anything of the slave trade ?" said I.

"Did I ? I should think I did," he replied.

"What did you see of it ?"

"Well, they talk about hardships now. Look what a fuss they made over the *Trevessa's* boats ! Why, they don't know what hardship is beyond how to spell it. Think what *we* went through looking for dhows ! They'd put us down, a crew and an officer, in open boats in the Red Sea, and there we'd cruise for weeks on end. Do you know what the Red Sea's like ?"

"Yes."

"Well, there you are ! I tell you I've seen some life ! I'll give you an example. One morning, not long after the sun was up, very little wind, light airs from the north, we were cruising off the Arabian coast near the Bab-el-Mandeb, and we picked up a sail. A blessed dhow it was, sure enough, slopping along down the wind. We made off up to her, and gave her a hail to heave to.

You bet she stood on her course just the same ! We were to leeward of her, and we pulled smartly and fetched up alongside, and the officer gave the order to board, when all of a sudden the Arabs let go their halyards, and down came the sail, flop !—all over us. But we were too many for them. Two of us ripped the sail with our cutlasses, and through the hole we slit up we all went to the daylight, and made quick work of the dhow's company." He paused.

"And did you find men below hatches ?" said I.

"No," said he impressively, leaning forward. "That's where you make a great mistake. We found a cargo of girls. Young, bonny girls they were, a bit on the dusky side, but full of beans and skipping about, as pleased as Punch to see us, sixty-three of 'em, and as innocent and as stark as the day their mothers bore them !"

The thuttering boom of a big steamer blowing outside recalled us to our more immediate and modest "hardships." Our *pro tem* host promised to use his influence, the power of which he made no doubt of, with the masters of the barge shipping. When we came out, the docks were no longer the vacant desolation of water and masonry they had been. The noise of cataracts was heard as the long lock filled from the basin. The dim outline of a liner loomed predominant, foreshortened, so that the bridge seemed crowned by the majestic column of the funnel which rolled up its inky volume of smoke in leisurely anticipa-

tion of its ocean power. Navigation and mast-head lights of tugs and tenders were seen in motion. Drowsy barges were being pulled from their slumberous berths with dim fires of good cheer glimmering from their forecastle houses. Outside the sealed gates the black water swirled and dimpled in the moonlight, while the eager breath of the night tide poured in tonic drafts into our lungs.

The first vessel to drop into the lock was a large, empty, iron coal-barge, with her tugs bound for Cardiff. On board of her our patron immediately repaired, calling loudly and imperiously for the skipper. Our friend had at any rate one transparent foible. Whatever humble station he himself occupied, he liked it to be thought that his friends were of the *quality*. So now we heard him with his "Skipper! skipper! Look here, skipper, there are two *ex-officers* want to go over the water. Can they come along with you?" A certain grunting was heard to issue from the waist of the barge in reply, the gist of which was that the *Captain* was obliged, but he didn't court the society of toffs. It was further added that had we been "out-of-works" he would have been pleased to accommodate us. Our influential friend was somewhat dashed by this, but still lent us his assurance that all would be well, and forthwith vanished, and we saw him no more. We now walked towards the liner, which was the *Quantock Range*. She was being warped down to the lock under the megaphonic guidance of the dock-

master. We walked along her fender-creaking sides, and picked up the information that she was not immediately foreign-going, but merely off across the water to Swansea.

“I think we might get a passage on her,” said Kay. “I know Sir ——, who has interests in the line, and I’ve done work for them.”

At this juncture we saw two policemen advancing. I at once became conscious that, although empty, our pipes were in our mouths—a stinking offence in the precinct of any dock.

“Progs!” said I to Kay, and instinctively, with that good force of habit engendered by our Alma Mater, we swept our pipes from our mouths, and marched at attention. As we came shoulder to shoulder one of the policemen stopped, and said to me—

“Excuse me, sir, but can you establish your identity?”

—My identity; great heavens! why not?—
“Come to the light of a lamp,” said I.

We repaired there forthwith. The matter was not quite so easy to clear up as it appeared to be at first sight. The second policeman, with commendable delicacy, suggested that I had somewhere in my mouth a gold tooth. “By no means,” said I; “I haven’t any false teeth at all,” on which I expanded my jaws for their inspection. This view, contrary to my expectations, seemed to afford them unbounded satisfaction. It then transpired that in the place where a gold tooth should have been there was a gap. “What!” I

cried. "Do you think I've thrown it away?" There could be no question that they were definitely of that opinion, and therefore they asked me to be good enough to step up to the station, where, they were unanimous in assuring me, I should only be detained a few minutes. "Even so," said I, "we may miss the tide, and we're bound to get over to Wales to-night," at which they smiled. But where was Kay? He had vanished. If I was going to be *copped*, Kay must certainly be *copped* as well. The second policeman, who had evidently been thinking a kindred thought, went off towards where my accomplice had last been seen.

Now pray picture that magnificent autocrat, the captain of the *Quantock Range*, sitting in stately isolation in his cabin, while the petty manoeuvre of warping and locking out is performed by underlings. There is a rap at his sacred portal, which on being answered is flung rudely open, and a strange figure steps before him—muddy boots gleaming with Alpine-climbing nails, curious knickerbockers, an orange scarf of feminine fabrication, and finally large, piercing, grey eyes earnestly beholding him under a high-crowned flop-eared hat. But there is no time for embarrassment, for the apparition speaks as one who can brook neither trifling nor delay.

"I'm Kay," says he.

"Ah——!" more thought than said.

"I've done work for your people. I know Sir ——. I hope I don't intrude, but as a matter

of fact we want to get over to Swansea, and we hoped you would take us with you."

"We——!" also more thought than said.

And now a little embarrassment on both sides and the mud of doubt stirred. With more points cleared up, the captain was not entirely sure that under the circumstances he quite saw his way, &c., &c. Says Kay to himself, "Bother that darned fool, Vale; why doesn't he come along? Between us we'd have the matter settled at once." At the same time the undoubted possibility that he might at any moment be cut off from the land presented itself. So aloud he temporises. "I'll just find my friend," he declares, and turns to go. Then for the first time it is observed that the mysterious visitor wears on his back a large and bulky pack such as pedlars and, for all the captain knows, anarchists carry. With a brief and, temporising still, non-committal farewell, Kay steps out on to the deck, and there he is confronted by an officer of the law, who asks him politely but firmly to "step up to the station." We wonder what the subsequent reflections of the captain of the *Quantock Range* have been on this incident.

Having joined forces once more we all marched off for the station, our late friendly confederates at the gates staring at us with a kind of horror as who should say, "You never can tell! You never can tell!"

The first policeman, who I shall now call P.C. Hunter, said as we went along, "I suppose you guess who we take you for?"

"You think he is X.!" said Kay, with undisguised glee.

"You've hit it!" said Hunter.

"But he's not the right height, is he?" said Kay.

"Ah!" returned Hunter ruefully, "that's the worst of it!"

I was fortunate in having been arrested by Hunter, for he was the best type of policeman. With a formidable glare, which he put on like a mask when occasion demanded and put off immediately the moment had passed, he was at heart an irrepressible boy. If he had not the sense of humour such as would tickle the palate of an intellectual, he had at any rate a rare sense of mirth, which was held in suppression only so long as his uniform reminded him of its proper place in the bosom of a constable. We paused outside the door of the police-station while the second policeman fumbled for the key. A dim-burning gas-jet shone through the narrow fan-light over the door with a sort of settled grimness well calculated to quell sinking hearts that waited on this threshold, which might usher them for ever from freedom and even sweet life itself.

Hunter turned encouragingly to his charges, and in a voice tinged with the burlesque enunciation of the best-approved comedian, said—

"The Abode of Love! The ever-open door!"

Having duly entered and turned up the gas, Hunter knocked on the ceiling, which signal was briefly answered with a single rap. I strolled

across the room and took a chair, which gave an ominous creak and lurch as I sat upon it. The second policeman hastened to me with another chair. "We don't want to break your neck!" said he apologetically.

"On the contrary," said I, the sinister ambiguity of his phrase flashing across me, "I think that is the very thing that you do want to do."

Presently the Inspector entered, clothed over his night attire with his official shell. There was a confidential muttering, and then he turned his eyes on me. I saw at once that he was convinced that I was X. He then sat him down in the seat of judgment, and requested me to stop smoking, after which the examination concerning my identity began. The documentary proofs of this were rather of a flimsy nature. There was a Post Office Savings Bank book, showing a balance not intended for the eyes of outsiders; there was a letter from my banker to my solicitor, urging him to urge me for the repayment of an overdraft; and finally, there was a letter from a young lady, who signed herself mysteriously "The Golden Bee." There was also the receipted bill of a hotel, my name on a piece of clothing, and a ticket admitting "one" to Stonehenge. There was nothing more. And now came questions as to where I had come from. The addresses on both letters and in the bank-book were all different. What was my permanent address? I had none! My way was traced backwards to Portishead (wandering without authority on the railway-

line and the docks), on to the bus, on to the road from Bristol, on to docks again there. At Bristol I was discovered to have been in possession of a bicycle, to which my name was not attached. Where was that bicycle? It was temporarily abandoned. What, in any case, was I doing in Bristol with a bicycle if I was on a walking tour? This bicycle, it was presently revealed, had carried me from London along an altogether unlikely and ridiculous route. To London it had carried me from the Eastern counties, where I had arrived on it from a shire in the west of England, having cycled there from Manchester where I had abandoned a red setter dog in whose company I had entered that city; the trio of us having, to begin with, originated our disjointed and quite incredible excursion from some place in Wales the Inspector neither attempted to pronounce, nor, I think, believed to exist. It is really amazing how irrational one's programme of life appears when once one falls under suspicion. A pause, during which much eye-scrutiny and chin-rubbing. Then P.C. Hunter suddenly claps on his thunder-mask and complicates the situation by venturing to ask me what I was doing in Manchester. I was there to see a goddaughter. Ah! a blunder! Had I not said that my goddaughter was located at Moulton in Cheshire? That was another goddaughter. Likely tale! And then was there not some idle talk about me now being on my way to Wales to see some goddaughter? No; not a daughter this time, but a mother—a fairy godmother, in

fact. What was I? Well, that was a hard question, too. I opined that I was a writer.

"What do you write?" said Inspector Bruce.

That again was a delicate question. Indeed exactly *what* I wrote I did not know myself. But I thought the snag might be negotiated by trotting out my most respectable literary alliance, so I said with evasive modesty, "Sometimes I write for 'Blackwood's Magazine.'"

"'Blackbird's Magazine'!" muttered the Inspector. One could see that this made a very doubtful impression.

It then occurred to me that my sports-coat was a local product spun on the foot-wheel and woven on the hand-loom by the Somerset weavers of Clevedon, who made some of the best tweed to be had anywhere in the country. They lived and wove but eight miles away, and would establish the identity of both me and my jacket. I pointed this interesting fact out with high hopes, but it was received with depressing reserve.

Then came Kay's turn. He was also deficient of corroborative literature. As to the question of what he *was*, the answer was as difficult as in my own case. His particular calling in life was so hedged with technical expression that to the plain lay mind it was almost ungetatable. In plain phrase it sounded highly specious and awkwardly suspicious in paraphrase. After a concentrated probing and sifting of Kay's homeliest descriptions of his employment without much result, it presently emerged that as a by-product

of his mystery he had certain professional associations with various shipping lines. What lines, for instance? Was he known on vessels of the Mount Line—the *Mount Elvira*, perhaps? Yes, certainly; one Brodie was the refrigerator engineer.

“The *Mount Elvira*,” said the Inspector impressively, “is here!”

“Send for Brodie!” cried Kay, starting up.

“I will,” said the Inspector, in a way from which one inferred that he was not the kind of fowl one catches with bluff.

Time wore on. It was two hours after midnight. Then came a turn in the tide of the official attitude towards us. Whoever we were, and whatever crimes we might have committed, and whatever lies we might be telling, they liked the oddity of us. In spite of the fact that the offence we were charged with was the gravest under our penal code there was nothing grave about us, yet we were not frivolous or facetious, even in the matter of god-relations. We struck a note that the plain sad walls of that room had never heard before; and though I have good reason to believe that their supposition that I was X. was strengthened rather than diminished, they liked us and we liked them. It was now hinted that we should not be let go till the morning, and, in consideration of the interval that lay between, discipline was relaxed, we were allowed to smoke again, and the Inspector himself went off to brew us some tea.

Kay now proceeded to while away the time by making a drawing on a large sheet of foolscap paper. Kay's drawings fall into an artistic category all of their own. They are really very fine, but are apt to be misunderstood, not only by the public but even by the artist himself. Often enough it has been left to me to interpret them. At the end of some abstruse discussion Kay will suddenly start up, crying out, "I am going to draw!" After slight pencil indications the paint-box flies open, and something after this fashion appears—a structure like a gibbet-head in the foreground; behind this a nude female figure, done all in solid red, is seen striking a rampant attitude. With pointed fingerless hands she seems to caress a stream of bubbles that now begins to fill the air. Lastly, in the background, a masterful rising sun forces dawn tangentially on a black sky. "What's that called?" says Kay, handing me the work. I look at it steadily for a moment, and then a kind of tune comes into my head, and I say, "The name of this picture is 'Red Lek tampering with the Bottershons.'" After that no further questions are asked by any one.

But in the place where we now were I had grave doubts as to how such a collaboration of genius would be received. I quickly noted in the massive head already delineated a convention for the hair that one could not blame our present entertainers for construing into a judicial wig, and a convention for the nose that would, with equal certainty, be taken for a judicial beak. I

therefore hinted to Kay that serious misconstructions might be put on his art. The police might even think we were caricaturing them. Immediately he printed in the top right-hand corner in large letters THE AIRMAN, and went on complacently. Great is the power of a label.

Presently the Inspector brought in the tea, served in his own best crockery, and having partaken of it, we sat round the fire and talked agreeably. Hunter sat at the table and wrote up office-books, while his chief joined the fireside *tête-à-tête*. Thus the Inspector was almost "one of us," although never quite so. It was plain that under his tunic he wore the uniform of repose, but he never so far allowed his official integrity to sink to the extent of doffing his cap; and though he laughed and talked freely, he would pop a question every now and then that perhaps might catch us unawares. Another hour of this sort of thing, and then we talked ourselves to a standstill, and there was no sound but the clock and the indefatigable pen of Hunter. I looked round. A notice hung close to me printed in large black type, **WANTED FOR MURDER**. To whom did that notice refer? Two out of the three men with me in this room believed confidently that it referred to me. I looked at the handbill again. Under the headline there was a little description, then a photograph, and then presumably some instructions. Adjacent to this was another notice headed simply **MURDER**, in type larger and blacker than

the other, as the spacing of the simpler phrase allowed. There was something about these notices that was coarse, low, horribly degrading. It was all very well to have a little joke about a mistaken identity, but what if I had been X. ? So much cool assumption that I was had already drawn me so far from my own self that I could feel the pitiless smirch of those words, the scorch of the brand of Cain. Inevitably I grew to an intimate sympathy with X. How indeed would I be feeling if I were in his shoes ? The room seemed changed. Whatever had been the agonies of the past few days, whatever would be the terrors to come, there was a terrible dull negative torture going on at the present moment as though independent, the apathetic hostility of trivial inanimate things—the colour of the walls, the tick of the clock, the cracks in the ceiling plaster, the scratching of a steel pen, the faint flat smell peculiar to prison cells, inseparable even from those three attached to the station. It seemed to have come suddenly into the power of these things to batten on the spirit, to curdle the cream of the imagination. A curious consciousness of time was borne in on me in a new relation ; the impassivity of it and yet the suffocation ! This is but the beginning of strangulations. When we shall come to the mere crushing of the wind-pipe it will be nothing ; we shall have dried our weird long ere that.

About half-past six there was a slight commotion ; the door was flung open, and a policeman marched in, followed by a little man, squarely

built, dressed in the uniform of a marine engineer. His face was exceedingly expressive. Behind his glasses looked out a pair of round eyes, at once quizzing, alert, and calm, not unfrequently seen in those who spend their lives in watching the eternal rolling of the sea and the eternal revolutions of marine engines. A certain smile he had with him, too, before which the atmosphere of suspicion under which we were all assembled flew asunder like a broken web.

“Brodie!” cried Kay, springing up.

“Why, it’s Mr Kay!” exclaimed the new-comer in great surprise, not, however, removing his hands from his jacket pockets.

“I say!” said Kay, “I am sorry they got you out of bed so early.”

“Ye’re airley up yersel’,” turning his head slowly, so as to quiz and smile at all of us in turn.

“You recognise him, then?” said the Inspector.

“Recognise!” said Brodie, still in the dark as to why he had been summoned to this doubtful tryst, but conceiving Kay to be in some unusual strait, and wishing to do him the best service possible. He paused to consider, but, perceiving that the Inspector was hanging on his words, he burst out suddenly, “Why, this is the mon that did my circulations!”

No doubt to Brodie his “circulations” was an expression as pregnant as “the fush” is to the Highland ghillie, or “the birds” to a Norfolk gamekeeper. And the way in which he said

it left no doubt in the mind of anybody that he who had been permitted to "do" Brodie's circulations was a person that should be accounted above suspicion. After this there was a pause, while Brodie again surveyed us each in turn. Then he said to Kay, "Am I to bail ye oot?" Kay assured him in the negative, and he was a little puzzled. Collisions with the police in seaport towns arose, in his experience, from causes few and simple. He turned to Hunter. "What's he been doing?" said he. "Has he been getting into trouble with the girruls?" No! it was not that. Well, then, it must be money, and Brodie was not to be put off by denials through any delicacy. He was prepared to stake his last farthing on Kay. He went away quite sad that a mere recognition was all that he was called upon to perform.

At last came the daylight, and with it another Inspector from the Criminal Investigation Department, armed with the authority of the head office at Bristol. While the two chiefs were in conference, the rest of us adjourned to a kind of gymnasium. Here the blithe spirits of P.C. Hunter could contain themselves no longer. He tossed a hat in the air, and kicking it with wonderful effect scored a goal on Kay's face, so that his pipe went flying. Kay and I attempted some gymnastics, with no very brilliant results; and Hunter, having watched us indulgently for a little while, unexpectedly turned a series of excellent somersaults on the floor.

We tasted again of the hospitality of Inspector Bruce, but it was not until after mid-day, when our identities had been further established and our credentials guaranteed by exchange of wires between Bristol and an eminently respectable reference furnished by Kay, that we were free once more. P.C. Hunter, who had gone off duty some time earlier, had now become our inseparable ally. Instead of going to repose after his long vigil, he must needs come back to the station in plain clothes, and there wait doggedly until we were let go, and then escort us back to the docks from whence he had imported us.

In the street the children of Avonmouth were all trooping back to school, amongst which, with square rosy face and a mass of fair yellow hair, was little Thora, the darling of our erstwhile captor. What she had been told about us I do not know, but it cannot have been too evil a report that had reached her, for she stood on the pavement and waved us out of sight.

And now we were come on to the docks again like Paul and Silas, with the forces of the law not only on our side, but anxious for our speedy departure. A word from our P.C. to the skipper of a barge, that with her tug had just towed from the basin into the long lock, and we were invited on board forthwith. The water fell below us to the tide-level; the dock-gates opened, and Avonmouth was translated immediately from a very material reality to a recollection, foremost of which stood out not the words "Wanted for

Murder," but the roguish eyes, the red cheeks, and yellow hair of little Thora.

The good ship *Carey* was a steel hulk, with a carrying capacity of six hundred tons. In a manner of speaking, she could boast both a head of steam and a ketch-rig, though the powers of the former were confined to the driving of a winch, and the sail-cloth of the latter was used rather for steadying the vessel in rolling than for propelling her. A captain there was, and a crew of five, yet their functions lay not in the sphere of navigation—bar steering, that is—but in the loading of coal from chutes in Wales, and in the discharging of it by means of baskets into the bunkers of steamers at Avonmouth. With these romantic handicaps it would not have been unreasonable to have expected that the *Carey* would be a mere floating bin, without any nautical association either in herself or in her men. But quite the reverse was the case. Captain Mathews and his crew had the frankness and simplicity of deep-sea sailors, and that stamp of detachment peculiar to all who go down in ships to the sea, the river, or the canal. They were competent, if called upon, to navigate. They were accustomed to the buffet of the storm. Their tongue could trip as glib as any sailor's in the phrase of sea-talk. But they had not that smouldering cynicism towards landsmen that your true sailor-man has, that little touch of the superb that holds a soul aloof. Instead, they had an additional asset, a

sort of dynamic humility, for which I can find no better word than homeliness.

The port having been cleared and the tug steaming ahead on her course, the man at the wheel was the only one who had anything to do on board. The remainder, and, by special invitation, ourselves, repaired to the forecabin. This cabin was not at all the mean caboose that it had appeared from the dock-wall. It resembled one of those cosy little war dug-outs of the more sociable type, for which we were indebted to the genius of German engineers. There was plenty of space and head-room. Good sound wood planking, and here and there a vast baulk of timber, gave an air of warmth and security. The berths lay athwart-ships, comfortably recessed off in the bulkhead behind the companion-ladder.

The captain sat on the chain-locker, and occupied himself in frizzling a steak over a stove, and the others sat round eating cold viands or smoking. I told my adventures of the night before, and the company were immensely tickled. But one of them took the matter seriously. He held that we had been badly served. We ought, he said, to assert our rights, and see to it that the police got their desserts for making such a foolish mistake. He was a man of a sad thoughtful face. There was a touch of the "sea-lawyer" about him. I have an inkling that holding forth on the rights of the oppressed was rather a pet theme with him. His sympathy was so wholehearted and personal that it went against the

grain to disparage him, but I felt we must stick up for our late hosts on account of the kindness they had shown us. That he was humanitarian in deed as well as word was amply proved by the fact that he offered us each a large wedge of the cake he was eating. This gift we did not hesitate to accept, as our hunger had been keen when we had arrived on board, and it was not appeased by the rich aroma arising from the briskly frizzling steak in the captain's frying-pan, nor by our subsequent observation of that luscious viand as it disappeared, bit by bit, into the smiling countenance of its proprietor, and was followed, through the agency of bread, by its juices and its grease to the very last spot.

For a moment drowsiness came over me. I nodded, and dropped headlong into the fangs of a nightmare. A pang of horror struck me. The steel trap of the law had sprung on me. I felt the squeeze of death by inches, and woke to the healing sounds of the popple of water about the bows of the *Carey*, and to the gentle heave of the sea, and to the sight of faces whose simplicity of expression seemed hardly to betray a care. It is astonishing how the great community of mankind is made up of a lot of little worlds that are all self-centred, each knowing hardly anything of the other. All night we had talked with the police. They had two all-absorbing interests—their homes and crime. Of the former we did not speak. All topics of conversation gravitated inevitably to the latter. The public that were not criminally

inclined had little or no interest for them. Now we were travelling in another little world of people, whose two interests were their homes and the carrying of coal. Of the first they said nothing, and as there was very little to be said about the latter, our silence was almost complete. I cannot say what the police knew about the real nature of bargemen, but I am prepared to wager it was very little. And about the ways of the police, the bargemen had even a cruder conception than the good Brodie.

We had no adventures during this voyage, and yet when we came ashore and stood in the noise and glare of Newport, we confessed to each other that it was a voyage we should never forget. There was something very serene about it, something very lovable, something that like a pretty fairy tale has the power of qualifying the mind for the best offices of sleep.

The next day, still somewhat steeped in the pleasant vapours of that deep slumber that had overtaken us after our long watch and fast, we decided, without actually framing our resolution in set terms, that we would keep the day to ourselves and the pleasures of our own company, and not meddle with the outside world at all. So we took our time, and walked over the hills to Cardiff.

The following morning was blue and sunny and bracing. My vote was to make for the country at once. But Kay would have it that we must go and see the docks. Like one who has long and

steadfastly rejected a book recommended by his friend, and who at last, peeping into it by chance, becomes enamoured so far that he will even abuse his friend for not having compelled him to read it before, even to this extent had Kay become enthralled by the glamour of coastwise shipping. He declared that we must do the next stage by boat no matter where she put us off, and to me, "Now you, a man of experience in these matters, you'll have to fix it up." So by vain praises did he hope to wean me from foot-slogging. Down to the docks we went, but though that "man of experience" bearded shipowners and even dock-policemen, he could do nothing, for no coastwise shipping was bound out that day. So we wasted a beautiful morning, and I found myself at noon still in the midst of that depressing Welsh town, with Kay on my hands in a disappointed mood. After you have been called a man of experience you have to carry things off with a high hand, so I said suddenly to Kay—

"We will go by train to Pontypridd."

"Why?" said Kay.

I had already asked myself that question and found no answer, so I said—

"That's my plan."

"Is there a train?" said Kay.

"Yes," said I, for I knew quite well that he knew I had no means of ascertaining any such thing. But he believes that I have special luck in these matters, so he said no more. Accordingly we booked to Pontypridd, and the train steamed

in as we got upon the platform. The sky was rapidly becoming obscured by clouds driving from the north-east, and we had not steamed for more than ten minutes before snow fell heavily. Our compartment was snug and our companions most agreeable fellows who told anecdotes of strange experiences in the underworld of coal. Pontypridd under a leaden sky and whirling snowflakes did not look at all a desirable place to get out at, so we continued in our snug compartment, listening to the anecdotes of our companions. The conversation moved on to the subject of toads found alive in the heart of the rocks. One of the men testified to having seen a toad that had been broken living out of the midst of a large piece of shale some hundreds of feet below the surface. Speculations as to the longevity of this creature when judged on geological facts induced a vertigo fit to turn the strongest head. But these colliers are used to dizzy feats, and a cool million or two in years did not seem to perturb them. Then Kay volunteered an anecdote.

“When I was a boy,” he said, “I heard these stories about toads living for ever, so I took a toad and placed him under a flower-pot which I buried upside-down in the garden, and put a large stone on top and covered it all over with earth. I thought I would take him out in a month. But I am ashamed to say I forgot all about him. After a year I suddenly remembered—‘By Jove, that toad!’ I instantly got a spade and dug up the flower-pot; and the old toad was

there perfectly all right. There was a pinnacle of clay reaching right up to the top of the flower-pot, which was caused through a gradual exertion of pressure as he had walked round and round inside the rim."

This story had great effect. That a man should adduce corroborative evidence of a toad having lived for a whole year on nothing went home with much more force than that a man should merely have seen one come out of a rock where it had *presumably* lived for æons.

By the time the train had pulled up to the head of the Rhondda Valley I had been able, by the aid of my maps, to mature "my plan." At the next station we alighted. The snow had blown away. The sky was blue again, the sunlight sparkled on white hills that stood up all around us, and the air thrilled with a piercing intensity of cold that made our teeth chatter. Immediately the train was gone I realised that it had carried off with it the good ash stick I had bought at Newport. I asked the station-master if he would telephone down the line and have the stick sent back by the next train. He said he would, but informed us that we should have to wait an hour and a half. "Never mind," said I, "we will go down a coal-mine." The station-master smiled at this notion—not altogether encouragingly, we thought.

However, there was a coal-mine not three hundred yards away, so thither we immediately bent our steps. We splashed boldly through a

purlieu of black mud, black outbuildings, and scrap material, but when we approached the official citadel Kay began to fight shy of this incontinent intrusion on an unsuspecting management. He urged that I should go forward and do the talking. Perhaps that strange, inscrutable surprise in the eye of the captain of the *Mount Elvira* haunted him, or perhaps he had grown a little sensitive about his peach-coloured scarf. He never disclosed his reasons, but he hung back. Having knocked on a door marked "Private" and received assurances, I entered. There I saw a man with a black face wearing a cap and overalls. In answer to my question he admitted that he was the manager. "My friend was afraid to come into your august presence, so I have left him outside," said I.

"Who is your friend?" said he.

"My friend," I replied, "is a man of many parts. Amongst other things he is something of a botanist."

"Oh, indeed!" said the manager. "A coal-mine is a very happy hunting-ground for botanists."

"Exactly," I agreed. "We found ourselves in this neighbourhood with a little time on our hands, and he thought perhaps you would be so good as to show us over your workings."

"Does he specialise in coal fossils?" said the manager.

"No; that is not his particular line," said I. "As a matter of fact, he is the inventor of the Q.Y., of which perhaps you have heard." The

manager had not heard of this, so I explained how it worked, and how his system was being taken up by this and that corporation. The manager became interested. He explained, however, that owing to our having come between shifts, it would not be possible for us to go down the pit, but that he would show us plans and diagrams, so that we could visit the workings in spirit if not in fact. Thereupon Kay was produced. Unfortunately his modesty got the better of him. He owned vaguely to being a botanist, but that, he explained, had no connection with his desire to visit the mine. Such a wish—if he had any—had been prompted by me, and was purely sensational. As to having invented the Q.Y., it was not, strictly speaking, an invention at all, but an experiment, in the kudos of which, he declared, others must be given an equal share. Having so propounded, he sat himself on a stool, and gazed abstractedly past the two of us, while he tapped the under-framing of the stool with his stick. The situation might have led to embarrassments had not the manager come to the fore, and said, “I see. You want to see the mine—just like boys!”

“Yes!” said we eagerly both at once. Then we all laughed and lit pipes.

The talk after this did not keep strictly to coal-mining. The manager told us how he lived in a large old-fashioned house that at one time had been occupied by a landed proprietor, who had taken great pride in his estate in the days when

the Rhondda Valley had been hailed as second to none in the kingdom for its beauty. That old gentleman of long ago had planted many remarkable trees and shrubs about the house that came from foreign lands. They still flourished in spite of the rigour of the winters and the prevailing atmospheric conditions of the Valley. Some stout native timber still grew there also. In particular there was one old tree remarkable both for its size and its peculiar habit of growth. It was called the "Haunted Oak."

"Is it haunted still?" said I.

He shook his head, smiling. "We gave it that name," he admitted simply, "just to make a little romance in our dull lives."

"The miner's life," said he, "is a very cramping one. In this Valley we get narrow. We spend most of our time underground, and when we come up, what is there to do or see? When I was a boy I used not to see the sun for two months each side of Christmas. Things are better now, but there's room for improvement still."

He then told us how he had installed wireless telephony at his old mansion, and what a boon it was, and what an interest his boy took in it, and how this lad of his picked up all kinds of information through this medium that helped towards his education and the broadening of his outlook on life. Experiences, he insisted, were a great thing. There was nothing so profitable to the understanding as gaining fresh experiences. We concurred. That, we pointed out, was the

whole reason of our presence in his office. Our persistence rather pleased than annoyed him. "Come," said he, "I'll take you down the pit myself."

And so, armed each with a stick and an electric-lamp, we entered the *cage*, and were dropped a thousand feet nearer the centre of the earth. It being between shifts, no work was proceeding underground. The silence of those galleries was in itself an experience. It seemed to have a quality that could be felt like the darkness of that great plague of ancient Egypt. Among other things our guide showed us a face that was being driven, for which the mathematical details of the survey had been worked out by his son. There was something so good in the humanity of this man that it made one reflect on the text that sets forth that our common parent was made in the likeness of God. Standing there in the midst of that black ruin that had once been a forest in a world of continents and oceans, teeming with birds and beasts and fishes, susceptible to the sunlight and the thunderbolt, the moonlight and the blaze of comet, while yet not a single soul was alive upon the earth; standing there, in the very museum of Death, and hearing this man talk with honest unobtrusive pride about his son, gave the inner consciousness one of those Wordsworthian flashes of an "intimation of immortality" that our higher faculties by long processes of the intellect seek in vain to catch.

Our ascent in the cage to the upper regions was

one of those stupendous and exhilarating sensations that the arts are powerless to describe. I will content myself by saying that it was magnificently hair-raising. The daylight was gone by now. All round the hills and crags gleamed in the crisp moonlight resplendent with new-fallen snow. Taking our leave of the manager, we went in search of my lost stick. My dumb friend was duly produced and flaunted before me with a neat label tied round his neck. "But," said the station-master's daughter, "it will cost you a shilling to get it back again." This unreasonable charge on the part of the railway company amused her so much that her eyes twinkled with mirth as she named the ransom. I might have been other than pleased myself had not the smile of this very bonny damsel called for a similar response quite incontrovertibly. "After all," thought I, "as the manager said, we must have a little romance in our dull lives, even if we have to pay for it through the nose at a railway booking-office."

And now we had to work out the last stage of that inspired plan of mine. It was no less than to cross the mountains and make a descent into the Vale of Neath. We had no compass. No track was shown on Bartholomew's half-inch map. But we had heard a rumour of some ancient bridle-path that went in this direction called the Old Parish Road. We therefore sought information for striking it. As usual, the people we inquired of were quite incredulous that we seriously intended to make a passage of the mountains before

the following day, and it was rather owing to our own judgment than their directions that we found the Old Parish Road. Steeply we rose up the side of that rugged hill that overlooks the head of the Rhondda Valley, and then striking our track and turning to the left parallel with the escarpment, we made our ascent by more gradual stages. Up here earth, air, and the heavens were transfigured by the exuberant enchantment of the frost. In spite of the broad moonlight, the stars gleamed like startled eyes, while below, the lights of collieries shone with steady brilliance, making in the midst of the snows a soft pool of gloom by very contrast.

These silent muffled solitudes, invested with the mysterious awe of night, seemed to us like another world after so much contact with men and modern things. The impression of vast dimensions weighed upon us. We walked and held our peace. The lights of the Valley disappeared, and we traversed a broad rolling upland with that track, not marked upon the map, still well-defined beneath our feet. But it did not remain so for long. When we had been going for about three miles it appeared to dissolve into two ruts or paths—we could not tell which for the snow,—one going sharply to the right and one going on ahead. We chose the latter. Almost immediately afterwards there appeared before us, with that impalpable uncertainty of moonlight, a great lowland. How far off it lay or where the descent to it commenced could not be gauged, for it suggested itself as a vague

sheeted trance rather than a landscape, relieved only by two distant twinkles of light and a dull grey patch, which seemed to emerge suddenly from the rest as if it moved to meet us. All at once we came to an abrupt halt ; our rut vanished into the air, and we found ourselves looking down on to the steely bosom of a lake, how far below us even now we could not tell. The air had been still as we had approached this spot, but here the wind was blowing stiffly and with icy penetration, and on that dim element below us we could distinguish a shadowy motion of waves. We retraced our steps, and joined the other path, which, after a little while, came out on to the edge of the cliff again, and presently, in a place less steep, zigzagged down on to the lower slopes. We were soon on a level with the lake, and walking on a wide moorland tract that descended gently. Looking back, the hill, from whence we had descended, appeared a sharp sickle-shaped escarpment, the upper crest of whose sheer frontal seemed, by the shadow under its brow, to beetle over the lake.

Hereabouts the path finally petered out, and we came to fields and hedges. In another half-mile we struck a farm-drive that led us into a lane. The lane was long and the turnings in it many, but it took us eventually into a high-road, and at about a quarter-past ten we strode, with the vigour rightly belonging to men of the mountain way, freshly come among the sluggish lowlands, into the long straggling village of Glyn Neath. Surely a man never feels himself, mind and body, so greatly superior to his fellows as when he drops

among them from the hill-tops on a frosty night. Even so we felt as we sighted two gaunt figures moving silently towards us in the opposite direction. They flashed a torch on us as we passed them. "X.!" hissed Kay to me, for they were police.

We came at last to an inn on the left. It was late to ask for a lodging, but the strength and assurance of the hills was upon us, and those who would have dissuaded us from entering were of the fair sex. They conferred in Welsh, and I interpreted their speech aloud to Kay. The fact that I knew something of their language opened their hearts more than our arguments. It was quickly arranged that the two maid-servants, who between them occupied a bed in the attic regions, should vacate it in our favour, and share the couches of upper members of the family. All was now good cheer and friendliness, and we were invited to sit by a cosy fire in the bar-parlour, while a light meal was prepared for us in the dining-room. The grandeur of the snow, the moonlight, and the rocks, that breathless glimpse of sudden death, the impressive powers of solitude, still clave to us as we sat gazing into the fire. The mere words of speech seemed weak agents for our thoughts.

Suddenly there was a thunderous knocking at the door, and the voice of one crying outside "Police!" The whole household scurried to obey this untoward summons. On admittance a gruff voice demanded—

"Is there any one staying here?"

"Yes, two gentlemen."

"Did they come just now?"

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

The door of our room, just ajar, was flung open, and a large man with a velvet-collared overcoat, Homburg hat, and silver-headed malacca-cane presented himself, followed by a very youthful constable. The former was by no means the mild plain-clothes officer, but the real heavy-jowled felon-hunting mastiff of the law.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" said he, with the air of your chess champion who makes his first pawn move. He splayed his hands on the table, and leaned forward, scrutinising us with gimlet eyes.

"I am not X.," said I simply.

This rather flustered his defensive precautions.

"May I ask where you've come from at this late hour?" said he.

"We have come from Blaen Rhondda over the mountains."

"Do you know the country?"

"No."

"Rather unusual, isn't it, to come at night over such a place as that?"

I looked at Kay, and saw unmistakable signs of a thunderstorm. Now when Kay thunders he does so with tropical violence, and I guessed that he did not intend that this inspector should meet with the mild weather that the police of Avonmouth had enjoyed. So I took a firm stand myself,

and recommended our friend to ring up Avonmouth, and not to obtrude himself on us any longer. I also begged that he would make apologies to the landlady for having startled hostess and guests in such an unnecessary manner. His youthful attendant grinned pleasantly at this truculent demonstration. There was a slightly awkward pause, during which the inspector also caught Kay's eye. In another moment we were rid of him.

"I'm sick of the police!" said Kay when they had gone, and after that the subject of X. was taboo. But we thought, in spite of pronounced assurances to the contrary, that this official disturbance had lost us some face with our hostess. However, we had an excellent supper, and thereafter an excellent night's rest in the little attic.

The following day was one of those golden days that seems to come at or about the end of almost every similar expedition with such automatic regularity that I am sometimes tempted to think that Providence watches over the welfare of the traveller who takes himself seriously, and gives him a prize for his pains. Even if it is not true it is a pleasant conceit, for expectations of rewards at the hands of Providence tend to decrease as the plot of civilisation thickens. This tempts me yet further to suggest that perhaps, quite naturally, our guardian angel is better pleased with us for using our own powers, be they of brain or muscle or soul, rather than relying on factitious amenities.

As soon as the first streak of dawn struck on the frozen window-pane I knew the prize day had broken, and I was ready with my plan before Kay had opened his eyes. The full extent of this I would not divulge, as Kay still considered himself not in sufficient training to engage in a really hardy feat. Even the first part of my programme that I discovered to him he cavilled at. He at once suggested an alternative route through the hills, the reason for which was too palpable to deceive any one. A railway ran beside Kay's suggested track. But to-day was the gift of Heaven. A hundred Kays would not put me off. I was, I told him, quite prepared to go Kayless rather than abandon my plan. He then told me that he suspected me of interested motives, and he was right. But the "interests" were so mild and so personal that, as they were not likely to tempt him in any way, I chose to keep dark on this point till they should develop, and for the same reason I will not vex the reader in this place. He shall share such mild excitements with Kay.

A real thorough-paced black frost had been at work. The temperature was still well below zero, though there was but little mist in the Valley, and the sun shone pallid but refulgent, himself like a frost-brilliant in a sky wan-blue and cloudless. Our way lay across a coll that separated the Vale of Neath from that of the Tawe. A steep hill presented itself immediately. An excellent start, thought I, for my hands and feet were as

icy as the puddles in the road. Not so, however, thought Kay. He had heard tell of a funicular railway that went to the top of this hill, and he held that he had no intention of walking where he might ride. It would, I knew, be his only chance the livelong day, so I offered no insuperable objection. To ask for a ride on a cable-railway in North Wales would be very nearly a crime, but in this respect, as in many others, the South Walian has a broader outlook. A little train of empty trucks stood waiting at the bottom of the steep incline. We nodded to two men, who in turn nodded to us, and into the trucks we got. The men had tags of iron like files attached to strings round their necks, with which to make contact on two wires that were carried on posts the length of the track. The effect of such a contact was to complete an electric circuit, which rang a bell in a distant engine-room. The two men, having made the necessary signal, sprang into the trucks, the steel rope jerked taut, and our train shot up the incline at a pace that in that frosty air was exhilarating. Having reached the source of our winding-power, we set out under our own steam. We followed no path, and steered by the general direction of the map over extensive heathy wolds covered with frozen snow.

Getting abreast of some higher country to the right that masked our view, we opened out the hills on the far side of the valley, towards which we made. Over these towered the peak of Carmarthen Van, with its southern flank sweeping

up in a long curve like the back of an ocean billow to a crest and then a precipice. By now the sky had grown a deeper blue, and the sunlight was more intense, so that in this striking landmark (the natural grace of its lines, the suddenness of its descent from peak to shoulder, shadow-tipped, and the softening tone of its celestial mantle) the terror and the beauty of nature were blended to a harmonious conception that woke the mind to great analogies.

Down a long slope, over a brook, a few moments' rest in a little farm-house, where the dresser gleamed with an array of lustre china that would bring tears of envy to the eyes of many a collector, and we are in a lane once more. Going along this we pass under a railway-line from Swansea winding north, and continue our descent more steeply down the confines of a glen that shepherds a small brawling brook into the still lower waters of the Tawe. Here, by a little bridge and trees of an umbrageous habit, hoary with lichen and ivy and every conceivable form of vegetable parasite that is discernible in mid-winter, we pause to discuss a very stale and stodgy bun purchased in the Rhondda Valley. The spot was one of those that one seems never to discover except on a long walk. They are like little epitomes of the romantic side of walking. Strange creatures haunted this place in the form of two goats. A weird goat is the weirdest of all weird things. I think that adjective must have been invented to explain the nature of this

creature. And these were the weirdest goats either of us had ever seen. They were brown as the blown leaves and hairy as the ancient roots of bygone parasites on a starved tree hard by, and their eyes had the look of the lorne knight that had peered into the book of the wizard Michael Scott. They took no notice of us, but stood on their hind-legs with their forelegs reached up as high as possible against the trunks of the trees, while their heads were buried in the ivy. Every now and then they would withdraw their faces and stare at each other, their mouths still chewing on the sustenance they had discovered in the secret darkness of the ivy. Kay endeavoured to persuade them to share a morsel of his share of the Rhondda bun, but they would not. He was charmed with these goats. Their very uncanny intelligence in rejecting what he offered them fascinated him, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that I persuaded him to prefer our journey to their society.

The beauty of the day was now at its zenith. The bottom of the Valley with its river still lay below us on our left. Beyond it was a steep bank of fields and trees, with a road about the same height as the one we were on, and going parallel to it up the Valley. Over and above this again were the lower slopes of the Black Mountains, culminating at this point in that peaked hill which we had seen from afar, the Carmarthen Van. Higher up both the river and the far road passed through a gap overfrowned by a majestic

rocky bluff, called Craig-y-Nos, the Crag of Night. Even the softness of the snows had not relaxed the moody look of that forbidding scene. Rather was the opposite the case, for it touched a tragic note that all the sheeted heights that stood around, melting to the mild blue above, seemed to echo. The responsiveness of sunlit snow to joy or sorrow is, I often think, one of those wonderful analogies of Nature still left for the poets to explore.

We crossed the river into the road that kept the hill over its right bank, and by this means went by the Crag of Night, and so, by the narrowing defile, came into closer and closer touch with the uncultivated wilds of the Black Mountains. I now began to enlighten Kay as to the first of my *interested* motives. The tale was this. About a year ago, in November, when the weather was wild, I set out from a spot near Swansea to walk to North Wales. Along this very road I came on that Sabbath evening, long after the sun had set. One inn had refused to put me up for the night. There were two more between me and the rough inhospitable wilderness of Carmarthen Van, over whose high shoulder, far from any road or track, I must then pass before I came to any other village. At the next place I had no better luck. Only one more inn was left, and it was not far off eight o'clock. At last I came to it. It stood alone, a small squat building, more like a mountain farm than an inn, an observation I made later when I also learned its name, which was as unpretentious as itself, merely descriptive

—Tavern-y-Gareg, the Tavern of the Rocks. But just then, on that wild night, it was a mere blurr. I had no mind to be rejected here, so, when the door was opened, I did not parley, but marched straight in and beyond the public room, which was in darkness, even into the kitchen, guided by the light. Here, merely bidding the company "Good-evening," I sat down. It was the landlord who let me in, though I had not been able to see his face till he followed me to the kitchen. Himself, his wife, and two other men now confronted me. One of the men had both the air and the clothing advertising the superior creature who lives in a town. By degrees I let out that it was my intention to remain their guest overnight. The husband and wife shook their heads over this. It was impossible, they said. There was much confidential Welsh muttered in bated breath, and the atmosphere became heavy with suspicion. I did not, however, feel quite the same definite hostility as I had felt at the other two inns, so I took off my rucksack, laid it on the ground, and adopted the attitude of passive resistance. Then the town man, with his superior sharpness and knowledge of affairs, took me in hand. Was I a surveyor? a maker of maps? a geologist? I told him I was merely travelling on foot instead of by train. Was I doing it for any kind of training in proficiency? No. Was I doing it for a bet? No. What on earth did I want to cross the Black Mountains for instead of going round by the road? &c., &c. In the

end he said, with the air of an examiner to an unsuccessful candidate, "I cannot place you at all—really, I am sorry, I cannot place you!"—"And travelling on Sunday too!" said the woman.

At this juncture a little girl came into the room—about thirteen years of age she seemed to be. Without paying any attention to the stranger, she took off her hat and cloak, and laid by her prayer-book, for she was just come from church. Then she turned and considered what manner of man I might be. I was quite astonished by the beauty of this child. She had come on the scene as a lovely thing will sometimes appear in the midst of life's commonplaces. I could not take my gaze off her. She was not bashful or yet overbold. She looked me gravely in the eyes, and every one remained silent as if they waited to gather an inkling from the oracle of instinct. I am afraid I stared hard, but admiration occupied me more than an apprehension of what she might make of me. Still she was not abashed. She leaned slightly on the rough edge of the table, the disposal of every limb a line of beauty, almost as in a sonnet, where each line multiplies its charm by its relation with the rest. Her face was solemnly composed while she scrutinised mine; but there was just a play of expression, as when sunlight on the water is reflected in brimming evanescence on the counter of a trim riding yacht. At last she smiled.

There was no more said about me not staying

at the little inn. Suddenly from a suspected person I was made to feel a welcome guest, in spite of the town man protesting to the end that he could not place me.

“And that,” said I to Kay, “is the reason that I have come this way. I want to see my little Pauline again.”

In a few minutes we came to Tavern-y-Gareg, but alas! little Pauline was not returned from school. I was gratified, however, to find that my erstwhile host and hostess not only remembered but welcomed me, and said they had often talked about me and wondered where I was.

I had broken the news gently to Kay that we must make the passage of the Black Mountains before bedtime, crossing the Carmarthen Van high up, right under the shadow of that exalted peak. He took it well. We left Tavern-y-Gareg shortly after three o'clock, and immediately we were outside I began to explain to him the second interested motive that compelled me to urge him onward across the Carmarthen Van. It was that in a place on the far side called Llanddensant, where I had rested for a meal on that winter's walk of last year, I had tasted of a famous ham. It must, I concluded, be the best ham in the world, as no ham could possibly be better. Saving for the charm and grace of little Pauline, there was not anything that had struck me so much in that long walk as this ham. Often and often had I thought of it since, and now I had resolved to taste of it again.

Soon we turned to the left down the little rough road that leads through the pass called Bwlch Cerigduon. The high part of the Van that we had seen coming along was now hidden by a large plain foreground slope that made a sky-line, with a smooth even crest, as far as eye could see. It formed one side of the Valley where we walked, the young Tawe, on whose left bank we found ourselves once more, brawling between with youthful impetuosity. The only thing that broke the even plainness and smoothness of that natural glacis across the river were occasional gullies, where noisy tributaries shot headlong from the skies to feed the river at our feet. Though the hills we had been on in the morning and the night before were quite withdrawn from civilisation, there was an air of detachment and soft musical solitude in this Valley that added greatly to our pleasure. We walked two and a half miles to a point where I had turned off when I came this way before. Here on a rising ground across the river there stands a beautiful little remnant of the Stone Age. It is a circle of elfin proportions, no more than nine paces across the ring. The remains of an elfin stone avenue lead to it, and a square dumpy monolith, the height of a man, keeps its mysterious vigil like an intruder petrified at unhallowed revels. This place I had represented to Kay when we left the inn as being "just over there," for which reason doubt grew in him that our farther passage of the mountains was as simple as I had indicated.

From here we went straight up that steep even declivity. We paused for a moment half-way up. The sun was on the point of setting. We could not see him, for his decline lay to our front. But across the Valley, which had its own huge monarch rivalling the Van in height, though totally different in shape (being a cliff-girdled, round-topped excrescence like an upturned hulk), we saw the moon rising. From the snowy landscape, where that hill stood up with its puckered brow, the clear frosty evening air showing it, bare crag and ample drift, with photographic precision, she mounted in a deep blue sky, herself white and soft-edged as fresh-fallen flakes, and with an indefinite transparency that made the snow seem hard by contrast. Far below the Crag of Night appeared, steeped in the first glooms of the twilight, and looking even more striking now than when it had seemed to tower above us.

Up and up and up, and then at last the top! In front of us, more than a mile away, stood the Carmarthen Van, not as we had seen it before, but in a totally new aspect. It was not new to me, but it was to Kay, and his surprise was genuine. We now faced the crag itself, that before we had only seen the edge of. The great feature of the mountain is, in fact, a sheer precipice that extends, all told, for a distance of four miles. It forms a rectangular figure, two sides of a square, exactly half looking to the east and the other half to the north. Varying in height from three to four hundred feet, it goes, on its eastern side,

straight as a wall from south to north, and, where it turns the corner, it culminates in a peak. From there to its western extremity it takes a snake-wise course, forming bold bastions and headlands. At two different points it overhangs a lake, each of singular and uncommon beauty, one of which has a strange tragic tradition, in which a man is the hero and a fairy the heroine.

The ground lay now almost flat between us and the Van escarpment, but it was very rough, and had not the frost been so strong would have been very swampy. As it was, the sources of rivers bore our weight, and peaty islands stood around us with their sides fringed with gleaming icicles. Daylight waned apace, the stars shone, and some whip-like clouds appeared high up, and drifted over the moon. In three-quarters of an hour's time, when there was no light save that of the moon to guide us, we came suddenly to sight of the first lake, the Llyn-y-Fan-Fawr, the greater Van Pool. When I saw this lake a year ago, it was at high noon. I remembered its daylight aspect. It was calm, with just a ruffle here and there. Not a reed, not a weed, not a blade of grass grew in the water. Some few rocks descended into it, but chiefly in its bays and havens its margin rested on a bevel of golden sand that sparkled as though with mica. There seemed to be no darkness in the lake, but, on the other hand, it gave the idea of being lit from below, making the water look transparent beyond its wont and touching the very reflections with an

ethereal lustre. Resting as it does half on the plateau and half in a recess of the great precipice, it focusses the beauty of the sky, the crag, and the plain, and touches with gilt the framing of the picture. It was from the bosom of this water that they say a herd of fairy cattle used to appear, driven to pasture on the land by a swan. When the swan herself took to the land she was changed to a lovely girl. One day this enchanted vision was seen by a shepherd-boy, whereby hangs the beautiful and tragic tale to which I have referred.

So we stood now with the Van Pool before us in the moonlight, and I told my companion the fairy tale. The light, veiled and diffused by the filmy clouds, touched the snows of the great overhanging cliff with a faint gold, and made the massive rock forms across the water look uncertain and impalpable. When I had finished my story, we stood silent, and there floated to us from between the stars and the snows the sound of a voice, husky, flat, metallic—the cry of a raven.

We left the Pool, and now we had to strike the line I had taken by compass the previous year. I had no compass now, nor even a map showing this part of our journey, but I thought I should guess the direction right. In point of fact I guessed it wrong, and in another hour's time we found ourselves among sodden morasses that I had to confess to Kay I had never found myself among before. Poor Kay! he looked round, but there was nothing to enlighten him but endless snow-flats and hills looming among the stars. He was

very fatigued and a little depressed by the arduous plodding. But the fact that I, the proud infallible guide, should have lost my way caused him, I believe, secret and refreshing satisfaction. His spirits wholly revived, and we pushed on with more vigour than we had displayed all that day. By dint of a little joint common-sense we formulated a plan, and in another hour's time we found ourselves walking still in the midst of the wilderness, but full of good cheer and faith. And here suddenly a road appeared as if by magic. I saw it first, a few yards away, and cried out to Kay. We stopped, and lo ! it stretched as far as we could see both ways, parallel to our direction, coming from whence we knew not, but going, we trusted, to Llanddensant and mine host of the excellent ham. So we continued to walk by faith, and in another hour's time we found ourselves in the outskirts of that very scattered village. Here we came to an inn, not the one, however, for which we had made this rough detour. But as it appeared that Kay's legs could hardly hold out any longer, I felt that we should be obliged to stay here. Yet by now visions of the ham had so wrought on him that he declared earnestly he would crawl on all fours rather than fail to achieve our proper goal.

And so in the end we got to the Red Lion ; and there we were most hospitably received. But it appeared we had come in an interval between the end of one ham and the beginning of another, which was not due to be cut for some time to

come. But when I told, not once nor twice, the tale of how we had battled with mountains, with rocks and swamps and snows, all for the sake of that ham, how I had thought about it over an entire year, talked about it, nay, written about it, the whole household rose up, moved with a magnificent compassion, and took the coveted triangle down from its ceiling hook ; and later on Kay bore me out with great enthusiasm when I said once more that this was the finest ham in the world.



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